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A BRIEF

STATEMENT AND EXPLANATION

OF THE

UNITARIAN BELIEF.

BY ORVILLE DEWEY.

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON,

LEONARD C. BOWLES, 147 WASHINGTON STREET.

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ON THE

UNITARIAN BELIEF.

We shall undertake to state in the following pages what we understand to be the prevailing belief of Unitarian Christians. Our position as a religious body seems still to require statements of this nature. It is a position, that is to say, entirely misunderstood. Misconstructions, once in vogue, seem to have a strange power of perpetuating themselves; or, at any rate, they are helped on by powers that seem to us very strange. In the face of a thousand denials, and in spite of the self-contradicting absurdity of the charge, it is still said, and, by multitudes, seems to be thought, that our creed consists of negations; that we believe in almost nothing. It seems to be received as if it were a matter of common consent, that we do not hold to the doctrines of the Bible, and that we scarcely pretend to hold to the Bible itself. It is apparently supposed by many, that we stand upon peculiar ground in this respect; that we hold some strange position in the Christian world, different from all other Christian denominations.

We must, therefore, if our patience fail not, explain ourselves again and again. We must, again and again,

implore others to make distinctions very obvious indeed, but which they are strangely slow to see, — to distinguish, that is to say, or at least to remember that *we* distinguish, between the Bible and fallible interpretations, between Scripture doctrines and the explanations of those doctrines, between mysteries and absurdities, between piety and fanaticism. The former we receive; the latter only do we reject.

Our position in the Christian world is not a singular one. We profess to stand upon the same ground as all other Christians, — the Bible. Our position, considered as dissent, — our position as assailed on all sides, is by no means a novel one. The Protestants were, and are, charged by the Romish Church with rejecting Christianity. Every sect in succession that has broken off from the body of Christians, the Lutherans and English Episcopalians first, then the Scotch Presbyterians, then the Baptists, the Methodists, the Quakers, the Puritans, the Independents of every name, have been obliged to reply to the same charge of holding no valid nor authorized belief. And what has been the answer of them all? It has been the answer of Paul before Felix, — that they did believe; that they "believed all things that are written" in the holy volume.

This same defence, namely, Paul's defence to the Jews, Luther's and Wickliffe's to the Romish Church, — the defence of Knox, of Robinson, of Fox, of Wesley, and Whitfield, and of our own Mayhew and Mathers to the English Church, — this same defence, it has fallen to our lot to plead as Unitarian Christians. We bear a new name; but we take an old stand, — a stand old as Christianity. We bear a new name, but we make an

old defence; we think, as every other class of Christians have thought, that we approach the nearest to the old primitive Christianity. We bear a hard name, the name of heretics; but it is the very name which Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Arminians, Calvinists, have once borne, — which all Protestant Orthodoxy has once borne, — which Paul himself bore, when he said, "After the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers." We bear a new name; and a new name draws suspicion upon it, as every Christian sect has had occasion full well to know; and we think, therefore, that our position and our plea demand some consideration and sympathy from the body of Christians. We think that they ought to listen to us, when we make the plea, once their own, that we believe, according to our honest understanding of their import, all things that are written in the Holy Scriptures.

There is one circumstance which makes the statement of this defence peculiarly pertinent and proper for *us*. And that is, the delicacy which has been felt by our writers and preachers about the use of terms. When we found, for instance, that the phrase, "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," and that the words, *atonement*, *regeneration*, *election*, with some others, were appropriated by the popular creeds, and stood in prevailing usage, for orthodox doctrines, we hesitated about the free use of them. It was not because we hesitated about the meaning which Scripture gave to them, but about the meaning which common usage had fixed upon them. We believed in the things themselves, we believed in the words as they stood in the Bible, but not as they stood in other books. But finding that, whenever we used these terms, we were

charged as even our great Master himself was, with "deceiving the people," and not anxious to dispute about words, we gave up the familiar use of a portion of the Scriptural phraseology. Whether we ought, in justice to ourselves, so to have done, is not now the question. We did so; and the consequence has been, that the body of the people, not often hearing from our pulpits the contested words and phrases; not often hearing the words, *propitiation*, *sacrifice*, *the fall*, *the new birth*, and *the Spirit of God*, — hold themselves doubly warranted in charging us with a defection from the faith of Scripture. It is this state of things, which makes it especially pertinent and proper for us, as we have said, distinctly to declare not only our belief in the Scriptures generally, but our belief in what the Scriptures teach on the points in controversy, — our belief, we repeat, in what the Scriptures mean by the phrase, "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," and by the words, *atonement*, *conversion*, *election*, and others that stand for disputed doctrines.

To some statements of this nature, then, we now invite attention; only premising further, that it is no part of our purpose, within the brief limits of this exposition, to set forth any thing of that abundant argument for our views of Christianity, which so powerfully convinces us that they are true. Our object, at present, is limited to *statement and explanation*. We would present the Unitarian creed, according to our own understanding of it.

With this object in view, we say, in general, that we believe in the Scriptures.

On a point which is so plain, and ought to be so well understood as this, it is unnecessary to dwell, unless it be for the purpose of discrimination. If any one thinks it

necessary to a reception of the Bible as a revelation from God, that the inspired penman should have written by immediate dictation; if he thinks that the writers were mere amanuenses, and that word after word was put down by instant suggestion from above; that the very style is divine and not human, that the style, we say, and the matters of style, — the figures, the metaphors, the illustrations, came from the Divine mind, and not from human minds, we say, at once and plainly, that we do not regard the Scriptures as setting forth any claims to such supernatural perfection or accuracy of style. It is not a kind of distinction, that would add any thing to the authority, much less to the dignity, of a communication from heaven. Nay, it would detract from its power, to deprive it, by any hypothesis, of those touches of nature, of that natural pathos, simplicity, and imagination, and of that solemn grandeur of thought, disregarding style, of which the Bible is full. Enough is it for us that the matter is divine, the doctrines true, the history authentic, the miracles real, the promises glorious, the threatenings fearful. Enough, that all is gloriously and fearfully true, — true to the Divine will, true to human nature, true to its wants, anxieties, sorrows, sins, and solemn destinies. Enough, that the seal of a divine and miraculous communication is set upon that Holy Book.

So we receive it. So we believe in it. And there is many a record on those inspired pages, which he who believes therein would not exchange, — no, he would not exchange it, a simple sentence though it be, for the gathered wealth of a thousand worlds.

That God Almighty, the Infinite Creator and Father, hath spoken to the world; that He who speaks indeed,

in all the voices of nature and life, but speaks there generally and leaves all to inference, — that He hath spoken to man distinctly and as it were individually, — spoken with a voice of interpretation for life's mysteries, and of guidance amidst its errors, and of comfort for its sorrows, and of pardon for its sins, and of hope, undying hope, beyond the grave ; — this is a fact, compared with which all other facts are not worth believing in ; this is an event, so interesting, so transcendent, transporting, sublime, as to leave to all other events the character only of things ordinary and indifferent.

But let us pass from the general truth of this record to some of its particular doctrines. Our attention here will be confined to the New Testament.

I. And we say in the first place, that we believe "in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost." This was the simple primitive creed of the Christians ; and it were well if men had been content to receive it in its simplicity. As a creed, it was directed to be introduced into the form of baptism. The rite of baptism was appropriated to the profession of Christianity. The converts were to be baptised into the acknowledgment of the Christian religion ; "baptised into the name," that is, into the acknowledgment, "of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

This creed consists of three parts. It contains no proof, nor hint, of the doctrine of a Trinity. We might as well say, that any other three points of belief are one point. The creed consists of three parts ; and these parts embrace the grand peculiarities of the Christian religion ; and it is for this reason, as we conceive, and for

no other, that they are introduced into the primitive form of a profession of Christianity.

The first tenet is, that God is a paternal Being; that he has an interest in his creatures, such as is expressed in the title *Father;* an interest unknown to all the systems of Paganism, untaught in all the theories of philosophy; an interest not only in the glorious beings of other spheres, the sons of light, the dwellers in heavenly worlds, but in us, poor, ignorant, and unworthy as we are; that he has pity for the erring, pardon for the guilty love for the pure, kindness for the humble, and promises of immortal and blessed life for those who trust and obey him. God, — yes, the God of boundless worlds and infinite systems, is our Father.

How many, in Christian lands, have not yet learned this first truth of the Christian faith!

The second article in the Christian's creed is, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person; not God himself, but his image, his brightest manifestation; the teacher of his truth, the messenger of his will; the mediator between God and men; the sacrifice for sin, and the Saviour from it; the abolisher of death, the forerunner into eternity, where he evermore liveth to make intercession for us. We are not about to argue; but we cannot help remarking, as we pass, how obvious it is, that in none of these offices can Jesus be regarded as God. If he *is* God in his *nature*, yet as Mediator between God and man, we say, he cannot be *regarded* as God.

The third object of our belief, introduced into the primitive creed, is the Holy Ghost; in other words, that

power of God, that divine influence, by which Christianity was established through miraculous aids, and by which its spirit is still shed abroad in the hearts of men. This tenet, as we understand it, requires our belief in miracles, and in gracious interpositions of God, for the support and triumph of Christian faith and virtue.

Let us add, that these three, with the addition of the doctrine of a future life, are the grand points of faith which are set forth in the earliest uninspired creed on record; commonly called "The Apostles' Creed." Its language is, "I believe in God the Father Almighty; and in Jesus Christ, his only-begotten Son, our Lord; who was born of the Holy Ghost and Virgin Mary; and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and was buried; and the third day, rose again from the dead; ascended into heaven, sitteth on the right hand of the Father; whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead; and in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Church; the remission of sins; and the resurrection of the flesh." Not a word here of "coequal Son," as in the Nicene Creed; not a word of "Trinity," as in the Athanasian. Things approach nearer, it should seem, to the simplicity of the Gospel, as they approach nearer to its date. To that simplicity of faith, then, we hold fast. On that primitive and beautiful record of doctrine we put our hand, and place our reliance. We believe "in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost." May the Father Almighty have mercy upon us! May the Son of God redeem us from guilt, from misery, and from hell! May the Holy Ghost sanctify and save us!

From this general creed, let us now proceed to particular doctrines.

II. We believe in the atonement. That is to say, we believe in what that word, and similar words, mean, in the New Testament. We take not the responsibility of supporting the popular interpretations. They are various, and are constantly varying, and are without authority, as much as they are without uniformity and consistency. What the divine record says, we believe according to the best understanding we can form of its import. We believe that Jesus Christ "died for our sins;" that he "died, the just for the unjust;" that "he gave his life a ransom for many;" that "he is the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world;" that "we have redemption through his blood;" that we "have access to God, and enter into the holiest, that is, the nearest communion with God, by the blood of Jesus." We have no objection to the phrase, "atoning blood," though it is not Scriptural, provided it is taken in a sense which the Scripture authorizes.

But what now is the meaning of all this phraseology, and of much more that is like it? Certainly it is, that there is some connexion between the sufferings of Christ, and our forgiveness, and redemption from sin and misery. This we all believe. But what *is* this connexion? Here is all the difficulty; here is all the difference of opinion. We all believe, all Christians believe, that the death of Christ is a means of our salvation. But how is it a means? Was it, — some one will say, perhaps, as if he were putting us to the test, — was it an atonement, a sacrifice, a propitiation? We answer, that it was an atonement, a sacrifice, a propitiation. But now the question is, *what is* an atonement, a sacrifice, a propitiation? And this is the difficult question, — a question, to the

proper solution of which, much thought, much cautious discrimination, much criticism, much knowledge, and especially of the ancient Hebrew sacrifices, is necessary. Can we not "receive the atonement," without this knowledge, this criticism, this deep philosophy? What, then, is to become of the mass of mankind, of the body of Christians? Can we not savingly "receive the atonement," unless we adopt some particular explanation, some peculiar creed, concerning it? Who will dare to answer this question in the negative, when he knows that the Christian world, the orthodox Christian world, is filled with differences of opinion concerning it? The Presbyterian Church of America is, at this moment, rent asunder on this question. Christians are, everywhere, divided on the questions, whether the redemption is particular or general, whether the sufferings of Christ were a literal endurance of the punishment due to sin, or only a moral equivalent, and whether this equivalency, supposing this to be the true explanation, consists in the endurance of God's displeasure against sin, or only in a simple scenic manifestation of it.

The atonement is one thing; the gracious interposition of Christ in our behalf; the doing of all that was necessary to be done, to provide the means and the way for our salvation, — this is one thing; in this we all believe. The philosophy, the theory, the theology (so to speak,) of the atonement, is another thing. About this, Orthodox Christians are differing with one another, about as much as they are differing from us. Nay, more, they are saying as hard things of one another as they ever said of us. Is it not time to learn wisdom? Is there not good reason for taking the ground we do, — the ground,

that is to say, of general belief and trust, without insisting upon particular and peculiar explanations?

We believe in Christ, — and well were it if we all believed in him too fervently and tenderly to be engaged much in theological disputes and denunciations. We believe in Christ. We pray to God through him. We ask God to bless us in his name. Christ's sacrifice is the grandest, the most powerful means of salvation. It was a transcendent and most affecting example of meekness, patience, and forgiveness of injuries. It was a most striking exhibition of God's gracious interest and concern for us, of his view of the evil and curse of sin, and of his compassion for the guilty, and of his readiness to forgive the penitent. It was an atonement, that is to say, a means of reconciliation, — reconciliation not of God to us, but of us to God. The blood of that sacrifice was atoning blood, that is, it was blood, on which whoever looks rightly, is touched with gratitude, and humility, and sorrow for his sins, and thus is reconciled to God by the death of his Son.

Now it is possible that we do not understand and receive all that is meant by the Scriptures on this subject. We admit it, as what imperfection ought always to admit; but we admit it, too, for the sake of saying, that, so long as we receive all that we can understand from the language in question, so long as we receive and believe every word that is written, no man has a right to say to us, without qualification, "You do not believe in the atonement." He may say, "You do not believe in the atonement according to my explanation, or according to Calvin's explanation;" but he has no right to say, without qualification, "You do not believe in that doctrine; you

do not believe in the propitiation, in the reconciliation, in the sacrifice of Jesus;" no more right, than we have to address the same language to him.

We believe, then, in the atonement. We believe in other views of this great subject, than those which are expressed by the word *atonement*. But this word spreads before our minds a truth of inexpressible interest. The reconciliation by Jesus Christ, his interposition to bring us nigh to God, is to us his grandest office. To our minds there is no sentence of the holy volume more interesting, more weighty, more precious, than that passage in the sublime Epistle to the Ephesians, "Ye were strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world; but now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off are brought nigh by the blood of Christ." It is this which the world needed; it is this which every mind now needs, beyond all things, — to be brought nigh to God. By error, by superstition and sin, by slavish fears and guilty passions, and wicked ways, we were separated from him. By a gracious mission from the Father, by simple and clear instructions, by encouraging representations of God's paternal love and pity, by winning examples of the transcendent beauty of goodness, and, most of all, by that grand consummation, DEATH, by that exhibition of the curse of sin, in which Jesus was made a curse for it, by that compassion of the Holy One, which flowed forth in every bleeding wound, by that voice for ever sounding through the world, "Father! Father! forgive them," Jesus has brought us nigh to God. Can it be thought enthusiasm to say, that there is no blessing, either in possession or in the range of possibility, to be compared with this? Does not rea-

son itself declare, that all the harmonies of moral existence are broken, if the great, central, all-attracting Power, be not acknowledged and felt? Without God, — to every mind that has awaked to the consciousness of its nature, — without God, life is miserable; the world is dark; the universe is disrobed of its splendors; the intellectual tie to nature is broken; the charm of existence is dissolved; the great hope of being is lost; and the mind itself, like a star struck from its sphere, wanders through the infinite region of its conceptions, without attraction, tendency, destiny, or end. "Without God in the world!" — what a comprehensive and desolating sentence of exclusion is written in those few words! "Without God in the world!" It is to be without the presence of the Creator amidst his works, of the Father amidst his family, of the Being who has spread gladness and beauty all around us. It is to be without spiritual light, without any sure guidance or strong reliance, without any adequate object for our ever expanding love, without any sufficient consoler for our deepest sorrows, without any protector when the world joins against us, without any refuge when persecution pursues us to death, without any all-controlling principle, without the chief sanction of duty, without the great bond of existence. Oh! dark and fearful in spirit must we be, poor tremblers upon a bleak and desolate creation, deserted, despairing, miserable must we be, if the Power that controls the universe is not our friend, if God be nothing to us but a mighty and dread abstraction to which we never come near; if God be not "*our* God, and our exceeding great reward for ever!" This is the fearful doom that is reversed in the gospel of Christ. This is the

fearful condition from which it was his great design to deliver us. For this end it was that he died, that he might bring us nigh to God. The blood of martyrdom is precious; but this was the blood of a holier sacrifice, of innocence pleading for guilt, "of a lamb without spot and without blemish, slain from the foundation of the world."

But we must pass to other topics, and the space that remains will oblige us to give them severally much less expansion in this brief statement.

III. In the third place, then, we say, that we believe in human depravity; and a very serious and saddening belief it is, too, that we hold on this point. We believe in the very great depravity of mankind, in the exceeding depravation of human nature. We believe that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." We believe all that is meant, when it is said of the world in the time of Noah, that "all the imaginations of men, and all the thoughts of their hearts were evil, and only evil continually." We believe all that Paul meant, when he said, speaking of the general character of the heathen world in his time, "There is none that is righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God; they have all gone out of the way, there is none that doeth good, or is a doer of good, no, not one; with their tongues they use deceit, and the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; and the way of peace have they not known, and there is no fear of God before their eyes." We believe that this was not intended to be taken without qualifications, for Paul, as we shall soon have occasion to observe, made qualifications. It

was true in the general. But it is not the ancient heathen world alone, that we regard as filled with evil. We believe that the world now, taken in the mass, is a very, a *very* bad world ; that the sinfulness of the world is dreadful and horrible to consider ; that the nations ought to be covered with sackcloth and mourning for it ; that they are filled with misery by it. Why, can any man look abroad upon the countless miseries inflicted by selfishness, dishonesty, slander, strife, war ; upon the boundless woes of intemperance, libertinism, gambling, crime, — can any man look upon all this, with the thousand minor diversities and shadings of guilt, and guilty sorrow, and feel that he could write any less dreadful sentence against the world than Paul has written ? Not believe in human depravity, great, general, dreadful depravity ! — Why, a man must be a fool, nay, a stock or a stone, not to believe in it ! He has no eyes, he has no senses, he has no perceptions, if he refuses to believe in it !

But let the reader of this exposition take with him these qualifications ; for although it is popular, strangely popular, to speak extravagantly of human wickedness, we shall not endeavor to gain any man's good opinion by that means.

First, it is not the depravity of *nature*, in which we believe. Human nature, nature as it exists in the bosom of an infant, is nothing else but capability ; capability of good as well as evil, though more likely from its exposures, to be evil than good. It is not the depravity, then, but the depravation of nature, in which we believe.

Secondly, it is not in the *unlimited* application of Paul's language, that we believe. When he said, " No, not one," he did not mean to say, without qualification, that

there was not one good man in the world. He believed that there *were* good men. He did not mean to say, that there was not one good man in the *heathen* world; for he speaks in another place, of those, who, "not having the law, were a law to themselves, and by nature did those things which are written in the law." Paul meant, doubtless, to say, that the world is a very bad world, and in this we believe.

Neither, thirdly, do we believe, in what is technically called, "total depravity;" that is to say, a total and absolute destitution of every thing right, even in bad men. No such critical accuracy do we believe that the Apostle ever affected, or ever thought of affecting. A very bad child may sometimes love his parents, and be melted into great tenderness toward them; and so a mind estranged from God may sometimes tenderly feel his goodness.

Finally, we would not portray human wickedness without the deepest consideration and pity for it. Alas! how badly is man educated, how sadly is he deluded, how ignorant is he of himself, how little does he perceive the great love of God to him, which, if he were rightly taught to see it, might melt him into tenderness and penitence. Let us have some patience with human nature till it is less cruelly abused! Let us pity the sad and dark struggle that is passing in many hearts, between good and evil; and, though evil so often gains the ascendency, still let us pity, while we blame it; and while we speak to it in the solemn language of reprobation and warning, let us "tell these things," as Paul did, "even weeping."

IV. From this depraved condition, we believe, in the fourth place, that men are to be recovered, by a process

which is termed, in the Scriptures, regeneration. We believe in regeneration, or the new birth. That is to say, we believe, not in all the ideas which men have annexed to those words, but in what we understand the sacred writers to mean by them. We believe that, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" that "he must be new created in Christ Jesus," that "old things must pass away and all things become new." We certainly think that these phrases applied with peculiar force to the condition of people, who were not only to be converted from their sins, but from the very forms of religion in which they had been brought up; and we know indeed that the phrase "new birth" did, according to the usage of language in those days, apply especially to the bare fact of proselytism. But we believe that men are still to be converted from their sins, and that this is a change of the most urgent necessity, and of the most unspeakable importance.

The application of this doctrine, too, is nearly universal. Some, like Samuel of old, may have grown up to piety from their earliest childhood, and it may be hoped that the number of such, through the means of more faithful education, is increasing. But we confess that we understand nothing of that romantic dream of youthful innocence. There are few children who do not need to be "converted," — from selfishness to disinterestedness, from the sullenness or violence of crossed passions to meekness and submission, from the dislike to the love of piety and pious exercises; from the habits of a sensual, to the efforts of a rational and spiritual nature. Childhood is, indeed, often pure, compared with what commonly follows, but still it needs a change. And that

which does commonly follow is a character which needs to be essentially changed, in order to prepare the soul for happiness and heaven.

Now there is usually a time in the life of every devoted Christian when this change commences. We say not, a moment; for it is impossible so to date moral experiences. But there is a time, when the work is resolutely begun. Begun, we say; for it cannot in any brief space be completed. How soon it may be so far completed, as to entitle its subject to hope for future happiness, it is neither easy, nor material, to say. But to aver that it may be done in a moment, is a doctrine of which it is difficult to say whether it is, in our view, more unscriptural, extravagant, or dangerous.

With such qualifications and guards, authorized by the laws of sound criticism, we believe in regeneration, and we believe that the spirit of God is offered to aid, in this great work, the weakness of human endeavor.

V. In the fifth place, we believe in a future state of rewards and punishments. We believe that sin must forever produce misery, and that holiness must forever produce happiness. We believe that there is good for the good, and evil for the evil, and that these are to be dispensed exactly in proportion to the degree in which the good or the evil qualities prevail.

The language of Scripture, and all the language of Scripture on this solemn subject, we have no hesitation about using, in the sense in which it was originally meant to be understood. But there has been that attempt to give definiteness to the indefinite language of the Bible on this subject, to measure the precise extent of those

words which spread the vastness of the unknown futurity before us ; and with this system of artificial criticism, the popular ignorance of Oriental figures and metaphors has so combined to fix a specific meaning on the phraseology in question, that it is difficult to use it without constant explanation. "Life everlasting," and "everlasting fire ;" the mansions of rest, and the worm that never dieth, are phrases fraught with a just and reasonable, but, at the same time, vast and indefinite import. They are too obviously figurative to permit us to found definite and literal statements upon them. And it is especially true of those figures and phrases that are used to describe future misery, that there is not one which is not also used in the Bible to describe things earthly, limited, and temporary.

So confident in their opinions are men made by education and the current belief, that they can scarcely think it possible that the words of Scripture should have any other meaning than that which they assign to them. And they are ready, and actually feel as if they had a right, to ask those who differ from them to give up the Bible altogether. Nay, they go so far sometimes, as to aver, in the honesty and blindness of their prejudices, that their opponents have given up the Bible, and have given up all thoughts of trying the questions at issue by that standard. We have an equal right certainly to return the exhortation and to retort the charge. At any rate, we can accept neither. We believe in the Scriptures, as heartily as any others, and, as we think, more justly. We believe in all that they teach on this subject, and in all they teach on any subject.

We believe, then, in a heaven and a hell. We believe that there is more to be feared hereafter than any man ever feared, and more to be hoped than any man ever hoped. We believe that heaven is more glorious, and that hell is more dreadful, than any man ever conceived. We believe that the consequences both in this world and another, — that the consequences to every man, of any evil habits he forms, whether of feeling or action, run far beyond his most fearful anticipations. Are mankind yet so gross in their conceptions, that outward images convey the most transporting ideas they have of happiness, and the most tremendous ideas they have of misery? Is a celestial city all that they understand by heaven? Let them know that there is a heaven of the mind, a heaven of tried and confirmed virtue, a heaven of holy contemplation, so rapturous, that all ideas of place are transcended, are almost forgotten in its ecstacy. Is a world of elemental fires and bodily torments, all that they understand by hell? Let them consider, that a hell of the mind, the hell of an inwardly gnawing and burning conscience, the hell of remorse and mental agony, may be more horrible, than fire, and brimstone, and the blackness of darkness forever! Yes, the crushing mountains, the folding darkness, the consuming fire might be welcomed, if they could bury, or hide, or sear the guilty and agonized passions, which, while they live, must forever and forever burn, and blacken, and blast the soul, — which, while they live, must forever and forever crush it down to untold and unutterable misery.

VI. Once more, and finally; we believe in the supreme and all-absorbing importance of religion.

There is nothing more astonishing to us, than the free-

dom of language which we sometimes hear used, on this subject; the bold and confident tone with which it is said that there is no religion among us, nothing but flimsy and fine sentiment, passing under the name of religion. We are ready to ask, what *is* religion in the hearts of men, what are its sources and fountains, when they can so easily deny it to the hearts of others? We are inclined to use no severity of retort, on this affecting theme, else the observation of life might furnish us with some trying questions for the uncharitable to consider. But we will only express the simple astonishment we feel at such treatment. We will only say again, and say it more in wonder than in anger, what must religion be in others, what can be its kindness, and tenderness, and peace, and preciousness, when they are so ready to rise up from its blessed affections, to the denial of its existence in the hearts of their brethren?

We repeat, then, that we believe in the supreme and all-absorbing importance of religion. "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" is to us the most undeniable of all arguments; "What shall I do to be saved?" the most reasonable and momentous of all questions; "God be merciful to me a sinner!" the most affecting of all prayers. The soul's concern is the great concern. The interests of experimental, vital, practical religion, are the great interests of our being. No language can be too strong, — no language can be strong enough, to give them due expression. No anxiety is too deep, no care too heedful, no effort too earnest, no prayer too importunate, to be bestowed upon this almost infinite concern of the soul's purification, piety, virtue, and welfare. No labor of life

should be undertaken, no journey pursued, no business transacted, no pleasure enjoyed, no activity employed, no rest indulged in, without ultimate reference to that great end of our being. Without it, life has no sufficient object, and death has no hope, and eternity no promise.

1st Series. No. 97.

FALSE WITNESSES ANSWERED.

"ANSWEREST THOU NOTHING? WHAT IS IT WHICH THESE WITNESS AGAINST THEE?"

BY JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE,

LOUISVILLE, KY.

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FALSE WITNESSES ANSWERED.

It sometimes happens that reports or assertions insignificant and contemptible in themselves, derive weight and importance from the source whence they emanate, and the extent to which they prevail. Even thus was it with the slanderous charges brought against Jesus by false witnesses. He answered nothing, until the High Priest or the Governor repeated them; then he spoke. It becomes those who profess to be his servants, always to endeavor exactly to conform their conduct to his. It has therefore occurred to us to be proper, that those, who say with Paul, "To us there is but ONE GOD, the *Father*," should take more notice than they have yet done, of a charge made against them, which seems to proceed from High Priests and Elders.

The charge amounts to this, that there is some kind of connexion between Unitarianism and Infidelity, — so that, if not really the same thing, they are not far from each other. This idea has been diligently circulated through the community, and causes many to look with a holy horror on those who worship the God of their fathers according to this way which men call heresy. But as far as our knowledge extends, no Unitarians have yet

taken the trouble systematically to refute it. They know very well, that such charges have always been brought against those who have attempted in any way to reform or alter the modes of religious belief of their time. They remember that Socrates was killed for attempting to teach the doctrine that there was but One God, in opposition to the religionists of his time, who believed in many thousand Gods. They accused him of impiety and irreligion, because by that craft they had their bread. They remember that the Prophets were stoned and beaten, and that the holy Jesus was called a Beelzebub and child of Satan, and that he said that the servant is not greater than his master, and that if they call the master of the house Beelzebub, much more will they say so of his household. Remembering this, and that in conformity with this prediction, Luther, and Calvin, and all subsequent reformers have been called Deists, Atheists, and impious men, they are not astonished at the same titles being given to themselves. They see that the reason is, that they are attempting to REFORM some points of the popular belief. They are willing to answer nothing, and wait till what is covered shall be revealed, and what is hid shall be known.

Still, for the sake of truth, it is well sometimes to break this silence, and calmly to examine and reply to the charges brought against us. Such a task we propose now to undertake. The charge falls under four heads, — either that Unitarianism is the same thing as Infidelity; or that it is a disguised Infidelity; or that though somewhat different, it is no better; or lastly, that it will lead to Infidelity.

Now these are serious charges, and ought not to be brought lightly, or without careful and thorough examination. Yet it is a well known *fact*, that they are brought continually, and by those who know nothing about the matter; who understand neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm; who could not, for the life of them, tell you the difference between the Unitarian and the Trinitarian belief.

Let us look at the charge then, in all its forms.

1. Many persons think, in the first place, that Unitarianism is but another name for Infidelity. They think that Unitarians believe neither in revelation, in Christ nor in the Bible; that they cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God; that they despise eternity, and live only for the pleasures of time.

This is the notion in its grossest form. This is the chimera which dwells in the imagination of those who have never known a Unitarian, read a Unitarian book, or entered a Unitarian church. The slightest portion of light, the least glimmer of knowledge on the subject, is enough to dissipate this spectral form. It resembles the ghosts, which in the belief of the ignorant, haunt the tombs by night, but which have never been known to abide the test of the morning ray. It vanishes, but may return in another shape.

2. The second form in which the charge is brought is somewhat thus. Unitarians, it is said, do, to be sure, profess to receive the Bible and to believe in Christ; but this is all a deception. "Nay! but he deceives the people," was the answer made by the Pharisees to those who urged that our Savior was a good man. Even

thus is it said of Unitarians that they are Deists in disguise, — that they know that Infidelity is unpopular, and therefore will not take that name, — but that they know, and that others, who can see deeply enough, know also, that it is all latent Infidelity, natural religion, and contempt for the Bible and Bible doctrines, concealed under a specious guise of rational Christianity.

This charge is made and circulated far and wide, but like the first, it keeps outside of the circle of positive knowledge. A little knowledge of Unitarian opinions puts to flight the first charge ; a slight acquaintance with Unitarians themselves will generally demolish the second notion. Whatever they are, it will commonly be found that there is no *disguise* about them, no Jesuistry, no public doctrine for the people and secret doctrine for the initiated. They are a little *too* open and careless in their assertions, if they have any fault in this thing.

Of Dr. Priestley it was said by Toplady, one of his bitterest Calvinistic opponents — "he is like a piece of chrystal, you can take him up, and look through and through him." Whoever has read or heard Dr. Channing must be equally convinced, that, whether he be right or wrong in his doctrine, at any rate he speaks what he believes. The whole essence and secret of his eloquence is, that he utters his *own* inmost belief and no other man's. Enough of this. We must leave it to those who know us and live among us, whether we are hypocrites and deceivers.

We may remark, however, that it is a little singular, if we are laboring in secret to spread Infidel opinions, that we should labor in public so zealously to destroy them ; thus reversing the process of ancient story, and unravel-

ing by day, the web we have woven by night. Unitarians have been more indefatigable, and I may add too, more successful, than any other body in opposing Infidel opinions, by argument and reason. The first great work written in opposition to modern Infidelity, which has formed the storehouse whence all subsequent writers have taken their weapons, was written by a Unitarian, Dr. Lardner. Dr. Priestley, at the very time that the pulpits in Philadelphia were occupied in slandering his religious character, was defending our common faith in public lectures against the infidel Volney, whom no one else could be found to meet. While theological professors and preachers in other denominations have been engaged in republishing the evidences of Paley, and the arguments of Watson and Leslie,— arguments which have lost much of their power with the majority of unbelievers now, because the field of controversy has changed,—Dr. Channing has, in his latest volume of Discourses, penetrated the depths of the actually existing scepticism, and instead of fighting with men of straw has seized the living questions on which hinge all real difficulties. He is not one of those men who draw their bow at a venture; he fights, not as one who beats the air; and his arrow, winged by the power of God's spirit, has carried conviction to many a darkened mind. Hundreds, yea, I might say thousands, have rejoiced in the light of this volume, to whom former volumes called "Evidences," and "Short Methods," were mere husks, not to be swallowed, or indigestible afterward. May we not say then, — "If Satan cast out Satan, how can his kingdom stand?" If we by Infidelity, overthrow Infidelity, its reign is well nigh over.

The truth is, this charge of deceit is always brought by

zealots and bigots against those whose views come nearest their own, without wholly coinciding. A Calvinistic theologian in Cincinnati, of the "Old School," once said to a friend of mine,—"I like you, Unitarians, better than I do the new Divinity Presbyterians." Why so? "Because they think as you do, but are not honest enough to say so." And, again, an aged Hopkinsian, or new school divine in Massachusetts, once declared to a Universalist, "I like the Universalists better than Unitarians, because you come out with all you think."—And the same spirit prevails among the zealots of Infidelity. In France, Rousseau was at one time persecuted by Voltaire and his party, and declared to be no better than a Christian in disguise, because he professed a reverence for the character of Christ, and would not go all lengths with those who denied and hated his religion. And to complete the catalogue, Voltaire himself, the bitterest foe of Christianity, was, in his latter years, accused of piety, and said to be a disguised religionist, because he maintained the being of a God, and would not join with the Atheists, Diderot and Helvetius.

We see then what the spirit is. It is that of the disciples, who forbade a man from casting out devils because *he followed not them.* "If you will not come into our little circle of opinions, we will drive you into the farthest extreme. Everything in our system is *essential.* Take it all, or none of it."

3. Now this brings me to the third form of the charge. It is admitted by many that we are sincere, and have no intention to deceive, but that our system is in fact no better than infidelity, because it wants certain essential doctrines. It is said that the Trinity, and the Deity of

Christ are *essential doctrines*, and that those who reject them have in fact given up fundamental truths.

Now there would be plausibility, and there might be justice in this, if we acknowledged that these doctrines were scriptural and then rejected them. But we profess not to be able to find them in the scriptures; this is our objection to them. The beginning and end of our argument is, that we have searched the scriptures to see if these things were so, and found them NOT so.

Now we say, — as every sect differs from every other as to what the Bible teaches, how shall we distinguish essential from unessential doctrines? We ought to have some rule, some principle to decide where the line shall be drawn. What shall that rule be? Catholics have no difficulty here; they say the Church, the Pope, the Councils shall decide. But what shall Protestants say? Shall they say the doctrines in which the majority agree are essential and orthodox? What *right* have they to say this? They have given up this claim to infallibility. They have publicly proclaimed that the SCRIPTURES are the only rule of faith, and that each man must interpret them for himself.

The Protestant rule, then, must be this, that those things alone are essential which the Bible declares to be essential. That truth which Scripture connects with salvation is essential, and that alone. For instance, it is said: —

"These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name." This, therefore, is an essential doctrine.

"If thou confess with thy lips the Lord Jesus, and be-

lieve in thy heart that God has raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." The resurrection, therefore, is an essential doctrine.

"Except a man be born again, he shall not see the kingdom of God." The new birth, then, is an essential.

"If thou wouldest enter into Life, keep the commandments." Obedience is therefore essential.

"If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Maintaining a Christian spirit then is essential.

"Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not *Charity*, it is nothing." Charity then is an essential.

These things, therefore, are all essential; and when you show me a text which says, "Except a man believe in the Trinity he shall not see the Kingdom of God," I will admit this doctrine among the essentials. Or if you will find one like this, "If thou wouldest enter into Life, believe in Election and Decrees," — or, "If any man does not believe that Christ is God, he is none of his," — or, "These things are written that ye might believe in Native Depravity, and that believing ye might have Life through that doctrine," — I will admit these likewise among the essentials. But until this is done, we cannot give them this character.

4. The fourth form in which the charge presents itself, is that of a *tendency* to Infidelity. It is said, that our opinions incline one to go further, — that they constitute a sort of half-way-house to Deism. This is the last assertion of our opponents. Driven from every other point, they betake themselves to this, and here on this ground, they wage war with us.

We will meet them here. We utterly deny the charge. We say that for one Unitarian, who has been a sincere and religious Unitarian, and who has become an infidel, we will show you a dozen of the Calvinistic faith. For one religious Unitarian whose children have become infidels, we will show you ten of the opposite party who have met with this dreadful misfortune. The assertion rests on no foundation of fact, but is a *mere* assertion.

But we cannot stop thus. We assert that Unitarianism contains the only effectual antidote to infidelity, and we will undertake to prove it. We must go deeper than is usual into this matter. We must show that the very trait in Unitarianism which causes the clamor against it as friendly to Infidelity, causes it to be the most fatal enemy which Infidelity has. We will show that as Infidelity extends itself, its aid must be called in, and that the only effectual rebuke and check must come from *our* despised and excluded portion of the Christian Church, or from other portions which hold the same leading principles under other names. Yes, when it is known, as it must soon be known, that the spirit of scepticism is undermining the churches, and that many of them are tottering, and reeling, and falling by the arrows of an unseen foe, — when it is seen at last that all sectarian disputes must be laid aside, and the church gird on its armor for its final desperate struggle with unbelief, then will it be forced to look for its leaders and champions among those whom in the day of its false security it trampled under foot. Just so, in the righteous Providence of Jehovah, the sons of Jacob were forced to supplicate aid in their distress from that brother whom they sold into bondage; just so, not unfrequently, does the stone which the

builders refuse, become the headstone of the corner. But we would assert nothing without proof, and we will give our reasons for this opinion.

It has been our fortune not unfrequently to meet with persons who declared that Unitarianism preserved them from Infidelity. Thus have we heard them speak;— "Had I not been an Unitarian, I should not have been a Christian, and had I not been a Christian I should have been the most wretched of men. I owe to my faith, that earth is not a desert and life a burden. I owe to it, content and cheerful acquiescence with the present, and hope for the future. Without Christianity I might have pursued empty pleasures, and heaped up corruptible riches, through a profitless and wretched existence; and when death came, I should have looked backward on a wasted life, and forward to a gloomy eternity. Such is the structure of my mind, that I could not have received religion through the channels of Calvinistic theology. In early childhood, my heart shrank from it, my mind spurned it. No inborn depravity, but the unperverted, unsophisticated soul of a child turned by instinct from the God of Calvin, to the God and Father of Jesus Christ, as manifested in the gospel of his son. Even if there were an evil spirit in me, it could distinguish between the true and false object of worship,— it could say with that other evil spirit in the Bible, Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?"

Cases like this, which are not uncommon, point out to us the true superiority which a liberal faith, (whether it be *called* Unitarian or not, is no ways important, we care not for names,) has over an intolerant and narrow one. We proceed to point this out more distinctly.

Our position is, that a liberal faith is the only effectual antidote to infidelity ; — and our reason is, that it is the only system which *does justice to Infidelity*, and admits the truth which Infidels possess. Now this requires explanation. Christians generally declare, that the only fountain of Infidelity is the wicked heart, which rebels against the strictness of gospel requisition. This is partly true and partly not. Find a lawless and selfish man, sensual and worldly, and ask him what is his creed, and he will commonly tell you he believes nothing of religion, or at any rate, he does not believe this thing of punishment. But sometimes we meet with an Infidel of a different character. We find an upright and generous, self-denying and reflective man, the model of a good citizen, parent, friend,—the weight and influence of whose character, however, is *not* given to Christianity. In the former case, the infidelity might be traced to the heart, but not in this. Here, it must be an error, and an honest error, of the understanding. But I hold it to be an axiom, that every honest error has some truth in it ; is a truth gone astray, it is a partial and defective view of truth. We must then admit that in the system of Infidelity there may be some grains of truth mixed with the mass of error.

Unitarians do admit it. They do admit that there is truth, Christian truth, which many Infidels hold without knowing it to be Christian, and which many religious sects have denied or neglected. Infidels contend for Freedom of Inquiry, of Conscience, of Opinion. They use these words as watchwords, and signals, and by means of them they attract many a generous heart to their cause.

The Christian Church generally has opposed these doctrines; it has restrained opinion, and limited conscience, and put barriers in the way of inquiry.

But Unitarians find that these watchwords, though used by Infidels, are in fact expressive of Christian truth. "*If I do not the works of Him that sent me, believe me not.*" "*Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?*" "*Judge not, that ye be not judged;*" thus does Christ free men from each others' authority, and subject them to his own. Christ and his Apostles taught the rights of Conscience, and commanded Free Inquiry as fully as did ever any Infidel Philosopher.

To illustrate this, let us suppose ourselves standing upon a height and looking down on the vast plain where the two great armies are advancing to the conflict. The hosts of Christ and the armies of the aliens are about to join battle. On one side we see the tents of Christendom, over the midst of which floats the standard of the Cross. But along the line wave other banners, designating the different detachments of the Church and their different leaders. On one is written the name of Calvin; on another that of Wesley; here is the Roman Church with glittering paraphernalia and splendid pageants; there behind the banner of the "Westminster assembly" marches a stern band of simple puritans; here goes a numerous party led by surpliced Bishops;—but each party has its own standard and leader, and keeps wholly distinct from the rest.

On the other side we see the army of Anti-Christ and Infidelity. In their front too are standards. They bear these mottos,—"No Religion,"—"No Faith,"—"No Priestcraft." They bear also, these words, "Free Inquiry,"—

"Reason,"—"The rights of Conscience." Each standard has its supporters. There are those in this army who hate Religion, and Christ, and every thing which is good; there are those also, who merely hate tyranny and love Freedom and Reason. These last are the strength of their army, for the love of Truth and Freedom animate their breasts; they falsely suppose that Christianity is hostile to human freedom. They have seen it *made* so, and they think it must be so.

Now we Unitarians, standing apart and watching these movements, at last determine to join in this conflict. We also advance our standards to the front. On one is written, "For God, For Christ, For Religion;"—on the other, "For Reason, For Liberty, For Free Inquiry." With these we advance. Now as the armies on both sides see us, some cry one thing and some another. Those who only see our second standard, the Banner of Reason and Liberty, cry out — Infidels! Infidels! It is uttered from both camps "Infidels!" "Infidels!" because one of our standards resembles the Infidel banner. And when they see the other, they cry out, "Infidels in disguise!" because they neither of them can see the consistency and fellowship of Christianity and Liberty, Reason and Religion. But they are and ought to be united. They belong together. We will therefore keep *both standards.* Both belong to the true army of Christ. And thus we shall despoil Infidelity of its strength, for its strength consists in the little quantum of truth contained in its doctrines. This is the little leaven which leavens the whole lump. It is not their opposition to Religion and to the spirit which resides in man, which enables them to make any advance. It is because they are thought to

be better friends of liberty and of human rights, that they are able to inspire any warmth into their followers. Let the Christian Church but determine to trust to truth, allow all freedom of Inquiry, cease to domineer over the consciences of men, and the unbeliever would no longer have any advantage; the car of the Gospel would roll on to triumph and glory.

In the mean time, we may expect to be misapprehended by both parties. Both parties are ignorant that Christianity is in reality the most tolerant and free system ever promulgated. But we have here given our answer. We have denied that we are in any sense, friends of Infidelity. We have declared ourselves its most dangerous foes. In God's time, this will be seen and known. Till then, we can wait with patience. If we are falsely censured, we have comfort enough, yes, joy and exceeding gladness, in the promise of the Lord to those whom men revile, and say all manner of evil against, falsely, for his sake—"Great is your reward in Heaven."

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THE

EXISTING STATE OF THEOLOGY

AS AN

INTELLECTUAL PURSUIT,

AND

RELIGION AS A MORAL INFLUENCE.

By JAMES MARTINEAU,
England.

PRINTED FOR THE

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The following Discourse was delivered, 1834, before the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. In adopting it as one of our series of Tracts, it was thought best to print it without alteration, notwithstanding its sermon form, and the few passages it contains of merely occasional or local reference.

I. R. BUTTS, PRINTER, SCHOOL ST.

DISCOURSE.

Acts ii. 7, 8:

And they were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

This week commemorates the most remarkable revolution of opinion that history records. If other anniversaries commemorate Christ, this celebrates the birth of Christianity; if others bring before us passages from his personal history, and tempt our thoughts to the scenes of his infancy, his sorrow, his death, his immortality, this recalls the history of his religion, considered as a set of influences operating on society. Christianity had finally passed from the lips and the life of Christ; it was no longer to be seen and heard; from the present it had been transferred into the past; it was just enshrined in that historical form which, first by the oral attestation, then by the written record, of disciples, has since been the medium of its agency on the world. The Galilean missionaries had just made their first efforts in the holy city, —just braced their conscience to assume their anxious yet

noble position, and plunged into all the responsibilities and perils and glory of their task. Even with the voice of the great Teacher still whispering in their memory, and the consciousness of inspiration fresh upon their minds, it was no light task, to peasants such as they, to re-awaken the passions which had acted the tragedy of the cross, and speak to priests of their guilt, to Jerusalem of its danger, to an unwilling people of their freedom and their hopes. But they were strong in the command, "Go ye, and teach all nations," and they went: and simple as were their instruments,—an utterance of power and miracles of love,—they set in action that mighty influence which has crumbled away superstitions consecrated by genius and time, and remodelled the sentiments and character of men.

We seek to diffuse a renovated Christianity;—amid the confusion of creeds to bring back the minds of men to the few grand principles which acted on the souls, and were heard from the lips, of apostles; which have maintained the vitality of the Christian system in every age; which our own times pre-eminently need, to conduct the process of social regeneration; and which alone can fulfil to the future the gospel's promise of perpetuity. We feel on us a mission, in character less peculiar, but in obligation not less sacred, than that of the messengers of the resurrection; the mission which devolves on all who have a love of truth to aid the agitation of thought. Not unfitting, therefore, is it for us to make this our week of Pentecost; to surround ourselves with the recollections of those days when the Christian controversy was first rife in Jerusalem; to feel sympathy with that earnest self-devotion with which, in the courts of the temple,

at the very shrine of an exclusive worship, in the audience of a wily priesthood, amid the fears of trembling friends, and beneath, perhaps, the fiery eye of Saul, Peter stood erect to proclaim a faith, whose Providence was impartial, whose devotion was spiritual, and whose promise was immortal life. The instruments of our task are indeed different: we have no touch of miracle with which to startle the careless attention, and, by banishing a pain of body, to create a listening serenity of mind. But neither does our mission require such aids; for the powers against which they were matched have passed away. Judea, then the strong-hold of unsocial religion, was soon lost in the vortex of Roman dominion; the imposing philosophy, the caustic scepticism, the graceful polytheism of Greece, were swept away by that hardy population of the North which was consigned to Christianity to educate; and Rome itself, whose magnificence attracted the last feelings of regard to a mythological Paganism, has now become venerated again as the representative of a mythological Christianity. Widely, however, as the modern reformer may differ from the ancient apostles, in the difficulties which he encounters and the agencies which he enlists, there was one feature in God's miraculous mode of disseminating the gospel which he may wisely imitate. The gift of tongues uttered to every tribe a different speech, and administered the same thoughts to the inhabitants of far-separated lands. And as this supernatural voice discriminated regions, so should our natural persuasion discriminate periods. The ages are no less diversified than the countries of the world; and each, having a peculiar character, must be addressed in a peculiar language; its genius and tendencies must

be consulted by those who aim at its improvement. In varying the modes of exhibiting great principles, there is no compromise of their immutability; for, in proportion to the magnitude of a truth is its versatility of application; and, like those comprehensive formulæ in physical science which include in their statement innumerable phenomena, and either stoop to the solution of the meanest motion on the surface of the earth, or rise to the interpretation of the planetary courses,—the great moral truths which constitute Christianity alike illuminate the individual conscience, and determine those mighty social questions which agitate communities, and preside over the vicissitudes of the world. From inattention to this character of pliancy, many Protestant churches have indulged in an inconsiderate passion for imitating the apostles; and, like all imitators, they have copied most scrupulously the only circumstances which are unfit to undergo transference. Overlooking the noble intelligence with which those holy men threw themselves into the wants of their own times and seized the singularities of their own position, they have trusted, in the diffusion of reformed opinion, to that one system which the first missionaries of the gospel, in the possession of miracle and without the possession of the press, found most effectual for the dissemination of historical fact. With a desire to avoid this error, and to appreciate justly the existing relations of Christianity to society, I propose to inquire, what are the means to which we should now trust for the promotion of theological truth and the elevation of religious sentiment among the great body of the people.

It is a law of Providence in communities, that ideas

shall be propagated downwards through the several gradations of minds. They have their origin in the suggestions of genius, and the meditations of philosophy; they are assimilated by those who can admire what is great and true, but cannot originate; and thence they are slowly infused into the popular mind. The rapidity of the process may vary in different times, with the facilities for the transmission of thought, but its order is constant. Temporary causes may shield the inferior ranks of intelligence from the influence of the superior; fanaticism may interpose for awhile with success; a want of the true spirit of sympathy between the instructors and the instructed may check by a moral repulsion the natural radiation of intellect: but, in the end, Providence will re-assert its rule; and the conceptions born in the quiet heights of contemplation will precipitate themselves on the busy multitudes below. This principle interprets history and presages futurity. It shews us in the popular feeling and traditions of one age, a reflection from the philosophy of a preceding; and from the prevailing style of sentiment and speculation among the cultivated classes now, it enables us to foresee the spirit of a coming age. Nor only to foresee it, but to exercise over it a power, in the use of which there is a grave responsibility. If we are far-sighted in our views of improvement; if we are ambitious, less of immediate and superficial effects, than of the final and deep-seated agency of generous and holy principles; if our love of opinions is a genuine expression of the disinterested love of truth;—we shall remember who are the teachers of futurity; we shall appeal to those, within whose closets God is already com-

puting the destinies of remote generations—men at once erudite and free, men who have the materials of knowledge with which to determine the great problems of morals and religion, and the genius to think, and imagine, and feel, without let or hindrance of hope or fear. In short, the cultivation of theological science is of superlative importance, not merely with the object of preserving to a class an elevated and dignified pursuit, but with the more excellent aim of elaborating for society the purest views of God, of human nature, of life and immortality.

There are many, I believe, who will smile at the application of the word science to theology, and set it down to the account of professional pomp. And if this feeling exists, as it naturally may, in the minds of able and philosophic men, it is itself an illustration of my position. If they, who know well what science is, cannot trace its image in theology; if from the latter they turn away, as from a thing of much clerical but little human interest; —what can be inferred, but that the religious literature of our country is far below the wants of the higher class of intellects, and needs the accession of more earnest thought, profounder reasoning, and a more comprehensive spirit of research, in order to redeem it from contempt. This feeling of contempt cannot remain for ever confined to those who are professedly studious: it has already, indeed, extended far beyond them; and intelligent and reflecting men, who yet make no pretension to philosophy, look with aversion on the leaden and soulless productions of the theological press. It is not to be expected that the labors of the biblical critic should ever become popular; but the distaste for them in England

proceeds from something else than the mere dryness of philology. They are felt to be technical and cramped; the awkward toil of minds manacled by creeds, endeavoring to atone by microscopic accuracy for imbecility in fundamental principles, and not pervaded by that true spirit of history, that sympathy with the soul of antiquity, which is essential to the interpreter of the venerable monuments of the past. Nor does our practical divinity meet with a much warmer welcome. It does not succeed in penetrating to the interior wants of our moral nature; it strives, and menaces, and declaims for admission to the heart; it proves its right of entrance, and yet remains without; it does not pass the sacred boundary, and steal into the home inclosure of the affections. It has, in fact, ceased to address itself to the common heart of humanity, and become exclusively adapted to that peculiar class of persons called "the religious public"—a class trained under highly artificial influences, strongly tending to make them, if enthusiastic, mistake extravagance for imagination, and vehemence for feeling; and, if sober, correctness for beauty, and solemnity for depth.

To the reformers, who placed the Bible in our hands, we certainly owe the very materials for scriptural study; to their rejection of authoritative interpretations, the motive to its pursuit; and to their own personal research, an excellect opening to its ample field. Yet it may be doubted whether the low condition of theology in this country is not to be ascribed, in part, to an ignorant use of the great principle of Protestantism; whether, in the eagerness to inculcate on every man the right of private judgment, the right has not been mistaken for the power. Urge on mankind their intellectual prerogatives, and be

silent on their intellectual needs; invite their judgments, and starve their minds, and it is easy to foresee the result; — they will be at the mercy of every shallow adventurer, and learn from him to dogmatise where wisdom doubts. Grave and intricate questions will be submitted to incompetent arbitration; theological and philosophical opinions, whose evidence is a compound of science, history, criticism, will be summoned before a popular tribunal; the advocates will adapt themselves to their audience, and the quantity and quality of their reasonings, the style of their language, the nature of their illustrations, will be such as may best persuade the ill-informed and impress the unrefined. If theology, like all other sciences, had been first organized by the meditations of superior understandings, and then, so far as its character admits, rendered accessible to the general mind, it is impossible that its phraseology could have been so coarse and vague, its logic so cabalistic, its spirit so narrow. I do not mean to imply that there is any thing peculiarly difficult in the Christian religion. The historical records which contain it, do in fact convey its great essentials to every mind; and they would suggest nothing else, if we could set mankind down to the study of them, with precisely the feelings which possessed the first hearers of the glad tidings. But to effect this simplification of feeling, to re-produce the natural and graceful attitude of mind with which the first converts listened, is the very difficulty which we have to encounter. Artificial conceptions, the long accumulation of centuries; subtle and scholastic questions, imbedded in the ponderous learning of other times; superstitious feelings, the heritage transmitted to us by generations of venerated men, have fastened themselves to

the words of the gospel, and overwhelmed the simple and pure impressions which their fresh utterance awakened. And hence it is, that we can now penetrate to religion only through theology — one of whose great offices it is, to clear away this dust of antiquity, and restore to sight our temple of pure worship in its majectic and beautiful proportions. It is the task of minds inured to toil and thought, to conduct this laborious work; it is the right of others to learn how it proceeds; and there must be a welcome to all who can qualify themselves to take part in it; but that sectarian democracy, which abandons exclusively to the suffrages of the multitude the decision of theological perplexities on which erudition and philosophy pause, needs an emphatic discouragement. The question, how is this discouragement to be administered? is a branch of that great social problem which the times are rapidly pressing to its solution — how are the evils, political and religious, of ignorance to be remedied? Society still fluctuates between two answers: one class eager to withhold from the uninformed all needless power; another, to afford them all needful knowledge. For my own part, I believe that consequences of immense magnitude depend upon the speedy triumph of the latter, — upon the reduction of authority to its minimum, and the elevation of intelligence to its maximum. And accordingly, the theological evil in question is to be extinguished, not by the legal recommendation of creeds, or spontaneous submission to them, not by any creation of ecclesiastical privileges, national or voluntary, but simply by the exaltation of public sentiment, and the communication of public self-knowledge. Nothing must be done to degrade

the right of individual judgment — much to augment the power.

Another cause of the poverty of theological science is found in the fatal association between mental error and moral turpitude. Take this fallacy by itself, and there is scarcely any form of malignity for which it may not be regarded as accountable. But in order to see its intellectual effects in theology, it must be viewed in connexion with another mistake — the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. In almost all other points, Christians have differed from each other; and the efforts of each party to collect all the evidence for its own opinions, like the one-sided eloquence of the bar, may terminate in the elucidation of the truth; and though the minds of the individual advocates may be injured by their professional habits, to the public the ends of theological justice may be finally obtained. But while the contents of the Bible have been eagerly discussed, its nature and character, though a preliminary topic of inquiry, have been little questioned; and notwithstanding many scholastic distinctions between different kinds of inspiration, it yet remains to be argued, whether the sacred writings are *literally* inspired at all. This point has hitherto, with singular unanimity, been taken for granted, and erected into an essential: it has been regarded as an inseparable element of a faith indispensable to salvation. Hence have resulted not only the vast mischief of untenable claims in behalf of the Scriptures, and a meagre appreciation of their real perfections, but a retardation of almost every species of knowledge which exercises the human mind. The Bible being regarded as a depository of all knowledge, its chronology, its physics, its logic, its

pnueumatology, even its Judaical institutions, were conceived to be faultless. This very error, which for ages sustained the faith of witchcraft, is at present occupied in combating physical science with the cosmogony of Moses, and extinguishing the philosophy of morals by the tradition of the fall. What science has it not embarrassed! Through what a host of difficulties, amid what a storm of hostility, had geology to struggle into existence! With what countless absurdities of speculation was it long encumbered, what incredible distortion of facts! And all, that the dates of the Old Testament might remain intact! And what has been the result? At length it is discovered that revelation is not interested in shewing that the globe has been created only 6000 years; and, as if to rebuke the narrow spirit that dreads the investigation of nature, as if to shew that the Creator is glorified by all knowledge, geology, while it has afforded no help to Deism, has given a fatal blow to Atheism. It has proved that the human species is a recent and sudden creation, and has not existed for ever, or been moulded by the gradual operation of merely material laws. It has laid distinctly bare to us the time when there was not a man on the earth: and thus, science itself has introduced us to the solemn moment, when the most magnificent and enduring of God's works was emerging fresh from the cloud of his power; when that most complex and delicate of organizations, the human body, and that most mysterious and beautiful of creations, the human soul, first stood erect beneath the heavens and on the earth, and drank in the spectacle of their glories. Astronomy, too, notwithstanding the noble elements it

contributes to our conceptions of the divine infinitude, has not been permitted to make its discoveries unquestioned: and Newton's philosophy has been assailed, lest we should have to alter our ideas of the six days' creation, and interpret afresh Joshua's command to the sun to stand still. And yet who that knows much of the young and intelligent, cannot testify to the power of this majestic science to quicken and elevate piety? How many holy thoughts have dropped from the heavens into the soul, — thoughts as vast and still and solemn as their own midnight! How many boundless aspirings have ascended beneath the stars, — aspirings as quenchless as those eternal fires!

Causes like these, by contracting the range, and lowering the tone of thought, have alienated theology from the respect of intellectual men; and a spirit of scepticism is diffusing itself among them, which all history proves to be unfavorable to the nobler forms both of morality and genius. In this state of things society has now a deep interest, but for the future, a far deeper. The temper of which I speak cannot rest with the class in which it is now visible; by an irreversible law of the mental world, opinion has a downward gravitation; and, unless the process is arrested, Christianity must at length go out at the lower end of society. The shadow once upon the edge of the orb, who can forget, that it may creep on till the whole disk be blotted out?

Now, if the alienation of thinking men from Christianity were the result of such study as so grave a matter demands, a Christian might regret, but could not censure, and ought not to interfere. But if it be only a hostility on the part of men of science to a system which has always

been hostile to them ; if it be only the disgust of refined philosophy towards the spirit of vulgar dogmatism ; if it spring from the unhappy position in which theology has been placed by its abandonment to sectarian tribunals, then it is no time either for contentment or for despair. There must be no injustice done to truth ; the gospel must not be allowed to glide out of men's minds on the surface of slippery errors not its own. And who are the fittest men to vindicate its character? Assuredly those who are not acted upon by the influences which have degraded it; those who see in it nothing to repress, but every thing to stimulate, the intellect, the imagination, the affections ; who can place a generous faith in the adaptation of the human intellect to the attainment of knowledge, and feel that man can discover nothing which God has not previously made true ; who can contemplate theology, not merely in its bearings on a creed, but as it lies on the great sphere of human knowledge ; who can see how it is placed in the centre of the sciences, and holds affinities with all ; how its chronological chain of documents links itself to the annals of every age ; its traditions of the primeval globe invite confirmation or correction from the history or the philosophy of nature ; its records of miracle touch on the rules of evidence and the theory of causation ; its views of life involve the principle of ethics ; its doctrine of Providence, the troubled question of moral agency ; its promise of futurity, the laws of the human mind, and the adjustments of human life. When men of this kind are encouraged by public sentiment to devote themselves to a free search into the resources of religious science ; when high powers of intellect, attracted by the mysteries of nature, life and miracle,

can speculate on them without compromise of mental liberty, or loss of moral sympathy, there will be better hopes for Christianity. But so long as minds that would thus take on themselves the vow of consecration are compelled, by a system of mental monachism, to incarcerate themselves in a miserable cell of thought, and listen only to the mutterings of superstition, blind to the glories of God's universe, and deaf to all its diviner harmonies, what wonder is it that genius recoils, and flies from this self annihilation? The errors, then, which sustain this system must be removed; all association between guilt; and any kind or degree of investigation must be broken; and the question respecting the nature of the Scriptures must be discussed. The agitation of these points is a prerequisite to the very existence of theology as a science; their settlement would effect in it a constitutional and organic reform, compared with which all particular grievances of doctrine are of little moment, and without which they cannot be redressed. Whatever public efforts may be made for the diffusion of a system, it is to be hoped that those higher services to Christianity, those more philosophical modes of exhibiting it, will be increasingly cultivated, which are indispensable to its preservation in the superior orders of minds, and through them in society at large.

This adaptation of theology to the demands of studious men, forms, however, but a part of our duty to Christianity. The use of theology is to conduct to religion: within an envelopment of science there lie great principles of faith and morals; and the administration of these to the soul of society is the ultimate object which sanctifies research. It is the business of theology to discover them;

to apply them, is that of religion. The two processes are related to one another, like the analytical and synthetical stages of physical science. The philosopher, by an examination of individual phenomena, and a detection of their mutual analogies, arrives at the knowledge of a general law; and then, with the aid of this key, proceeds to the interpretation of appearances before unintelligible, and the prediction of others before unknown. And the use which he makes of the events of the material universe, must the spiritual teachers of mankind make of the Scriptures and the moral creation; first, by careful analysis of them, rise to some simple and comprehensive principles, and then, by the power of these principles solve the perplexities of duty, interpret the mysteries of Providence, trace the tendencies of life, and prophecy the issues of futurity. The first of these processes must be abandoned to men of cultivation; and I have endeavored to shew how future generations are interested in its speedy restoration to their guardianship. But the other process, the application of the great moral and devotional principles of the gospel to the living interests of mankind, is eminently popular; it is the business not of the student, but of the preacher, and of all institutions which aim at the general diffusion of religious influences; and on its wise conduct depends the character of the present, more than the faith of remoter times.

The attempts made in this country to bring controversy before popular tribunals, while they have made theology superficial, have rendered religion sectarian. There is very little soul-felt repose upon a venerated faith, very little free and earnest and simple application of any principles to the relations of individual or social life; but a

restless, uneasy feeling, which vents itself in every class by enmity to others' creeds, and is little soothed by satisfaction with its own. The plea of mystery is still urged in behalf of the ancient doctrines; but it no longer receives a willing acquiescence; the plea of rationality defends our own faith; but with a success almost as dubious. Perhaps both are imperfectly adapted to the existing state of the general mind; the former, to its modes of thought; the latter, to its modes of feeling. Every age has its prevailing character, its prevailing taste, which will influence even the most dissimilar forms of its literature; any class of productions that pretends to alienate itself from this influence must share the fate of all that sits apart from the heart of society; it will be neglected first, and then despised. At the era of the reformation, the plea of mystery was nothing strange; men were accustomed to mysteries every where, — in history, in science, in life; their principles of investigation had not been defined; their feelings of veneration had not yet settled on the true and ascertainable; the habit of submission to authority was but imperfectly broken; the awe which will always be given to the sublime, the infinite, the eternal, was yielded to the unintelligible; and when the appeal in religion was made to the mysterious, the loftiest minds of the age heard it and did it reverence, and delighted to repose on its imagined sanctity. Hence, the whole literature and speech of those times were pervaded by hearty allusions to the notions which needed this defence; they were not confined to the works of controversialists and priests; not abandoned to the exposition of professional believers; neither blazoned forth with the air of effrontery on the one hand, nor insinuated with

timid apology on the other; but like all ideas which are sincerely embraced, they assumed their natural place in the stock of general sentiment, and filled their natural proportion in its utterance. This state of things has long passed away. But it does not follow, that because the minds of men are no longer satisfied with the mysterious, their hearts will be contented with the rational. They feel that, after the proof of a faith, must come its use; wearied of the eternal talk of the corruptions of religion, they entreat to be presented with its pure and fresh influences. They desire to reach the end of this long and hard theological ascent, and, resting on the elevation to which it should conduct them, gaze down on the outspread scenery of life and Providence, and watch the gliding of its shadows, and trace the streams of its mighty tendencies.

The sectarian state of theology in this country cannot but be regarded as eminently unnatural. Its cold and hard ministrations are entirely alien to the wants of the popular mind, which, except under the discipline of artificial influences, is always most awake to generous impressions. Its malignant exclusiveness is a perversion of the natural veneration of the human heart, which, except where it is interfered with by narrow and selfish systems, pours itself out, not in hatred towards any thing that lives, but in love to the invisible objects of trust and hope. Its disputatious trifling is an insult to the sanctity of conscience, which, except where it is betrayed into oblivion of its delicate and holy office, supplicates of religion, not a new ferocity of dogmatism, but an enlargement and refinement of its sense of right. It is the temper of sectarianism to seize on every deformity of every creed, and

exhibit this caricature to the world's gaze and aversion. It is the spirit of the soul's natural piety to alight on whatever is beautiful and touching in every faith, and take there its secret draught of pure and fresh emotion. It is the passages of poetry and pathos in a system, which alone can lay a strong hold on the general mind and give them permanence; and even the wild fictions which have endeared Romanism to the hearts of so many centuries possess their elements of tenderness and magnificence. The fundamental principle of one who would administer religion to the minds of his fellow-men should be, that all that has ever been extensively venerated must possess ingredients that are venerable. If, in the spirit of sectarianism, he sees nothing in it but absurdity, it only proves that he does not see it all; it must have an aspect, which he has not yet caught, that awes the imagination, or touches the affections, or moves the conscience; and those who receive it, neither will nor should abandon it, till something is substituted, not only more consonant with the reason but more awakening to these higher faculties of soul. Hence, a rigid accuracy and logical penetration of mind, the power of detecting and exposing error, are not the only qualities needed by the religious reformer; and in a deep and reverential sympathy with human feelings, a quick perception of the great and beautiful, a promptitude to cast himself into the minds of others, and gaze through their eyes at the objects which they love, he will find the instrument of the sublimest intellectual power. The precise logician may sit eternally in the centre of his own circle of correct ideas, and preach demonstrably the folly of the world's superstitions; yet he will never affect the thoughts of

any but marble-minded beings like himself. He disregards the fine tissue of emotions that clings round the objects which he so harshly handles; and has yet to learn the art of preserving its fabric unimpaired, while he enfolds within it something more worthy for it to foster and adore.

As, then, it is to the moral and imaginative powers of the human mind that religion chiefly attaches itself, as it is by these that the want of it is most strongly felt, so is it to these that its ministrations should be, for the most part, addressed. While theologians are discussing the evidences of creeds, let teachers be conducting them to their applications. Let their respective resources of feeling and conception be unfolded before the soul of mankind; let it be tried what mental energy they can inspire, what purity of moral perception infuse, what dignity of principle erect, what toils of philanthropy sustain. Thus would arise a new criterion of judgment between differing systems; for that system must possess most truth, which creates the most intelligence and virtue. Thus would the deeper devotional wants of society be no longer mocked by the privilege of choice among a few captious, verbal, and precise forms of belief. Thus, too, would the alienation which repels sect from sect give place to an incipient and growing sympathy; for when high intellect and excellence approach and stand in meek homage beneath the cross, how soon are the jarring voices of disputants hushed in the stillness of reverence! Who does not feel the refreshment, when some stream of pure poetry, like Heber's, winds into the desert of theology! when some flash of genius, like that of Chalmers, darts through its dull atmosphere! some strains of elo-

quence, like those of Channing, float from a distance on its heavy silence!

Such, then, are the objects which should be contemplated by those who, in the present times, aim at the reformation of religious sentiment: first, the elevation of theology as an intellectual pursuit; secondly, the better application of religion as a moral influence. Both these objects are directly or indirectly promoted by the Association, whose cause I am privileged to advocate. It aids the first, by the distribution of many a work, the production of such minds as must redeem theology from contempt. It advances the second, by establishing union and sympathy among those, whose first principles are in direct contradiction to all that is sectarian, and who desire only to emancipate the understanding from all that enfeebles, and the heart from all that narrows it. The triumph of its doctrines would be, not the ascendancy of one sect, but the harmony of all. Let but the diversities which separate Christians retire, and the truths which they all profess to love advance to prominence, and, whatever may become of party names, our aims are fulfilled, and our satisfaction is complete. When faith in the paternity of God shall have kindled an affectionate and lofty devotion; when the vision of immortality, imparted by Christ's resurrection, shall have created that spirit of duty which was the holiest inspiration of his life; when the sincere recognition of human brotherhood shall have supplanted all exclusive institutions, and banded society together under the vow of mutual aid, and the hope of everlasting progress, — our work will be done, our reward before us, and our little community of reformers lost in the wide fraternity of enlightened and benevolent men.

The day is yet distant, and can be won only by the toil of earnest and faithful minds. In the meanwhile, it is no light solace to see that the tendencies of Providence are towards its accelerated approach. And however dispiriting may sometimes be the variety and conflicts of human sentiment, — however remote the dissonance of controversy from that harmony of will which would seem essential to perfected society, it is through this very process that the great ends of improvement are to be attained. Hereafter it will be seen, much more clearly than we can see it now, that opinion generates knowledge. Like the ethereal waves, whose inconceivable rapidity and number are said to impart the sensation of vision, the undulations of opinion are speeding on to produce the perception of truth : they are the infinitely complex and delicate movements of that universal Human Mind, whose quiescence is darkness, — whose agitation, light.

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STATE OF THE TIMES.

Twenty years of controversy have just passed by. It has been a season, we may suppose, much like that of all controversies, but it has had its own characteristics, and, what is worthy of special observation, it is likely to be followed by more distinct and lasting results than generally happens. A theological discussion of great severity is oftentimes carried on for years, and yet it would be difficult to trace its consequences anywhere, excepting in the books which have been written, and which are themselves soon forgotten. But in the present instance a broad mark has been left upon the very face of society, a permanent change has been effected in some of its institutions, and in the relations of its members. For it has been one of that series of struggles for liberty and light, which began at the opening of the Reformation in Germany three hundred years ago, and which is pushing on step by step toward the completion of that immortal

work. Society advances in opinion, in knowledge, in institutions, by some great effort of its powerful minds, and then pauses for a time, — as if to secure and consolidate what is gained. Then another effort, agitation, and advancement, and again another pause. During these pauses, it may seem stationary, it may even appear to the apprehensive mind, retrograde; but it is certainly true that revolutions do not go backward; and though the tide of improvement as it rolls up its glorious waves, may appear to be occasionally retreating, it is only to gather up its might and come on with a firmer swell; — while dame Partington and all her maids brandish their ancient mops in vain.

It is rolling in upon the shore of one of these larger swells that has attracted our attention during the last twenty years. The Reformation has been making a vigorous advance. The commotion has been extensive, the tossing has been fearful, the alarm and bustle of those exposed to the spray has been loud and earnest. At length the height of the swell seems to have past. There are symptoms of greater quiet and repose. To change the figure, the heat of the warfare is over; the great battle has been fought; and it is time to look about us and see what is the result, where the world stands, and what use is to be made of the losses and the acquisitions of the contest. I know no more instructive inquiry to the impartial seeker of truth. Who will undertake the investigation? Perhaps the day for it is not yet fully come; in order to a satisfactory decision, we must perhaps wait for the termination of several most interesting discussions in various unconnected portions of the christian church, which are now in fervent progress, — all of them growing

out of the great action of the principles of the Reformation, all a part of the mighty struggle of the times for liberty and light, all portending salutary change throughout the religious world, and giving to the thoughtful observers auspicious pledges of the sure advent of a day of complete and established reform. Let the people praise thee, O Lord, let all the people praise thee!

It is no part of my design to look at the whole of this most extensive subject. I confine myself to that division of the church, which has stood in the front rank during the recent contest, which has carried furthest the principles of the Reformation, and has consequently suffered (as the leading corps in this cause have always done) from the suspicions, the opposition, and the anathema of the general body of the believers. The majority of those who have reformed to a certain extent, has always been seriously inimical to those who desire to reform further. "They have come to a period in religion," (to quote the significant expression of the immortal Robinson,) and they call it orthodoxy. To go a step further, and read the next sentence, is heresy, and heretics of course are not to be tolerated. This intolerable class at the present age is that of Unitarians. They are desiring to press the Reformation beyond the orthodoxy of the present times, just as the Puritans desired to press it beyond the orthodoxy of the English church; and are therefore to be regarded and treated no better than those unfortunate schismatics were treated by the powerful sects around them. Happily, indeed, no *secular* persecution is possible in these days; but doubtless the wicked Puritans of King James's time were not worse in the eyes of the monarch

and the church, than the wicked Unitarians now are in the view of the leading powers in church and state.

The recent controversy has been not simply a discussion of opinions, but a contest for rights; it has involved questions of reputation for piety, claim to the christian name, and, in some instances, questions of property. It has been the cause of various trying changes in the domestic and social relations; it has rent asunder long united communities; it has touched, in all parts of the land and sometimes with a most ungentle hand, many of the tenderest interests and charities of life. With so many circumstances and occasions of exasperation, is it strange that it sometimes, on both sides, took an unhappy tone of bitterness and recrimination? Are we to wonder, when the excited disputant sat down to his task of argument or defence, and remembered that not only his most sacred opinions were to be shielded, but that momentous results of immediate tangible good and ill, happiness and wretchedness, were at stake, — are we to wonder that he sometimes spoke too warmly, accused too fiercely, answered too indignantly, and was over valiant in the use of provoking and irritating missiles? There is much of this to be lamented and forgiven on both sides. Must I not add, there were some specimens of debate so coarse, so insulting, so unprincipled, so after the school of the great calumniator, rather than that of Christ, that the writers themselves, can look back upon them only with astonishment and abhorrence! — We had been accustomed to plume ourselves on the decency and politeness of the age. We had quoted the base vulgarities of Luther and Calvin, or the strange ill-manners of a semi-barbarous century, impossible to be permitted in the more decorous intercourse of modern society. Alas, we were

made bitterly to know, that no refinement of the age can prevent the atrocities of speech by which a malignant and exasperated bully will delight to vent his own depravity of heart, and flatters himself that men will call it zeal. Let such things be forgiving; but let a mark of reprobation be put on them; let them be hung up in conspicuous places, as a warning to those who shall be called to the next contest, that it is required of a man that he *contend lawfully*, and put away from him *all bitterness, clamor, wrath, evil speaking, and malice.*

Yet, on the whole, there is much upon which the mind may look back with satisfaction and devout gratitude. Those to whom I write, will not fail to recognise the hand of a wise and gracious Providence in much of the fiery trial through which they have been called to pass. "If the Lord had not been on our side when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us. Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth." We have much to be thankful for, in the manner in which the discussion on the whole was conducted; for the vigor, manliness, strength and sobriety, — for the fairness, seriousness, love of truth and spirit of piety, by which it was sustained and imbued; and for the lofty eloquence of faith and fervent attachment of heart, with which the SOUL of christianity, — its vital and life-giving essence, — was clung to, advocated, appealed for, in the midst of this confounding din about the outworks of opinion. Now that it is so far past, let us gratefully adore the goodness which has brought us through, purified, improved and advanced as a people, rather than consumed, dwindled, deteriorated. We had a conscientious and extreme dis-

like to controversy. We dreaded its operation as a blight on the kindliness of the affections, and the devoutness of the spirit. We entered its perilous way with anxious alarm. But we now find, that our fears did not prophecy truly. Piety has not decayed, religion has not languished, the charities of life have not perished. On the contrary, we seem to have clasped the more closely to our bosom the spiritual treasures of our faith, and to have valued them more highly than ever. We tested and felt anew their unspeakable worth. And probably practical and vital religion was never more esteemed and prevalent, than at this very time when we are issuing from a storm which seemed destined to destroy it.

This then is the present aspect of our religious affairs. We have discussed with our differing brethren the doctrines respecting which we differed, and the questions are at rest. *The result is, that we are a community by ourselves.* When we began the debate, we were members of the general congregational body, communicants at the same tables, and sheep under the same shepherds. (I speak in general terms.) Now, a separation has taken place. We have our own congregations, our own ministers, our own institutions and instruments of religious improvement. It is a crisis of unspeakable interest to us. We are deeply concerned to know what is the character and power of those institutions, what the nature and operation of our distinctive faith, and how far we are faithful representatives, advocates, stewards, of that pure and glorious Gospel on whose behalf we have been allowed to contend.

I feel oppressed with the magnitude and solemnity of the question I am approaching. I have looked at it in

some moments of retired thought, when I could get far enough from the distracting bustle of this world's interests, to perceive the worth of higher things, and have been overwhelmed as I mused at the vastness of the considerations here involved. I fear that those most concerned, are too insensible to them. I fear that the god of this world is blinding their eyes to the tremendous responsibilities of their position. I know myself to be habitually so careless and unalive to it all, that I am alarmed lest we should be found all sleeping together in a fatal security: and I pray for strength to be able to set forth something of the truth, and to draw to it the attention of my fellow-believers.

I must begin with a statement respecting our community, which is necessary to be carefully considered, in order to a just appreciation of what shall follow. We are familiar with the distinction between *real* and *nominal* christians. Every sect, every congregation, has its nominal adherents,—those, namely, who, from birth, or residence, or policy, or other accidental circumstances, are attached to it, but are not deeply pledged to it as a matter of conscience and salvation. There are such nominal christians every where. They are found in our community, as well as in others. Generally speaking they are not regarded in any community, as a part of the actual efficient force of the camp, nor as the fair representatives of the character and principles of the body. *Neither are they to be accounted such in ours;* — and this is a position to be insisted on. It unavoidably happens, from the circumstances of the case, that our community is encumbered with rather an unusual proportion of these irregular adherents; and it is a fact, not only not to be over

looked, but to be carefully explained, if we would understand aright our situation and our duties.

Let us recollect then, that there are among us two classes of congregations, the old and the new, — originating under different circumstances, and existing beneath different influences. The Old congregations are, many of them, equal in point of antiquity to the country itself; they have very gradually receded from the orthodoxy of their forefathers, and have become what they are without passing through any period of effervescence or convulsion. Such societies, in point of steadfastness, order and general quietness of faith, do not differ from other old societies. But the new congregations have been the creation of the times. They have been formed by schism and secession; and, like all seceders, have something of a spirit not perfectly accordant with the best condition of personal religion. Some of them are the offspring of an open rupture and a violent contest with friends and neighbors, when the spirit of religion was mingled with personal animosity. Some have more calmly withdrawn from the places in which they were brought up, where they had long silently listened to doctrines which they disbelieved, and had sat for peace sake among religionists with whom they had no sympathy. They have always been in opposition to the minister and to the current theology of the place; consequently, they have received into their souls none of those wholesome influences which come from early attachment to the institutions of the Gospel, and are very likely to be void of that deep sense of their worth and necessity, which leads men to struggle for them and maintain them, at any cost and at some sacrifices.

And, next, in all our congregations, and throughout

every part of the country, there is a class of men who have attached themselves to us simply because we are not orthodox; men, who dislike Calvinism, but who like nothing else; who think religion a good thing, that ought to be supported, and are glad to find some form which they can support different from that which they have been taught heartily to hate. They are anti-calvinist, anti-orthodox, anti-zealots, anti-everything severe and urgent in religion. They will not forsake it, because to do so would put them out of good society; indeed, they are not without a vague traditional respect for it. They maintain a pew in the church, for the same reason that the worldly-minded merchant asks his minister to say grace when he has company to dine. It is decent and is expected of him. Such men are found among the loose hangers on of every sect. A sect in the church militant is made up like an army going forth to war. There is the select body of the wise and hearty, who enter zealously into the merits of the cause, and give themselves to it soul and body. There is the larger number of considerate and faithful adherents, bound to it unflinchingly, but who are merely followers of the opinions of their betters, and take on themselves none o the responsibility of judging the merits of the case, or deciding on the propriety of the measures. There is still another class, who care little about the matter, who are in this army merely because it so happened, but are no more interested in its movements or success, than as they increase or diminish their own personal comforts. And lastly, there are the loose retainers of the camp, now here, now there, now nowhere, who like the protection of the flag and swell the numbers of the march, but who owe no allegiance, per-

form no service, and are but a pestilent hindrance to those who are earnest in the cause. Such men, I say, are hanging about the skirts of every sect, — they hang about ours: would to God we could make good Christians of them! they are far enough from it now.

There are others, too, far enough from being good christians: forward and respectable men, who, for worldly reasons merely, whether of public good or of personal credit, take a zealous part in the secular concerns of the congregation, and identify all its interests with their own character, — very honestly devoted to a cause to which they bring disrepute by their own characters, — sincerely wishing to strengthen the hand of religion, and by the very act calling forth the sneers of the ungodly and encouraging the ribaldry of the vain. Would to God, that such men would either leave the ark of the Lord to itself, or purify themselves before they touch it!

It is sometimes made occasion of reproach, that such men are found to attach themselves to our societies. But very unreasonably, for, as I said, they are to be found attached to every sect, — every sect numbers among its followers many merely nominal christians, and many worldly irreligious men. The agitations of the times may have cast a larger proportion of these into our ranks than into those of the more popular sects. If so, it is precisely what has always happened and must happen in regard to those denominations which distinguish themselves in the contest for liberty. It is precisely what took place at the Reformation. At that time, the Reformed church, struggling for liberty, was obnoxious to this same reproach, and was accused as tauntingly of protecting the lax and irreligious, as the Unitarian church now. Any reform which is urged on the principle of greater freedom of

mind, will be open to the same accusation ; for it will be favored by many worthless men who are strenuous advocates for *liberty*, but care nothing for virtue. At the beginning of the Reformation in England, it was a common saying, "The further from Rome, the nearer to God ;" and under shelter of this, multitudes were glad to go as far as possible from the good things of Rome, no less than from the evil. Bishop Burnet tells us respecting those days, that "the irregular and immoral lives of many of the professors of the Gospel, gave their enemies great advantage to say, that they ran away from confession, penance, fasting and prayers, only that they might be under no restraint, but indulge themselves in a licentious and dissolute course of life." It is to be expected that irregular and licentious men should thus take advantage of the state of the times ; but their doing so should create no prejudice against the cause itself. It is, however, one of the circumstances to be taken into consideration in our judgment respecting the position which we occupy, and the duties which are imposed upon us.

Such is a cursory view of the condition in which we stand at the close of the struggle, which has made us a distinct denomination among the churches of our land. Thus do we stand before the world, just three centuries after the beginning of the Reformation, at the moment when we have been striving to do our share toward carrying its great principles into complete effect.

It is a moment for pausing to look around us, a crisis of unspeakable interest. It is now to be tried and known what are the power and worth of the principles for which we have been contending. It is to be seen whether we are willing to ADORN the doctrine we have received to ourselves : whether we can LIVE for our faith, as well as

fight for it; whether we will struggle as hard for the *character*, as we have done for the *name*, of christians. It is impossible that the present state of things should not powerfully affect the all-important questions of personal religion, and call for strenuous exertions of duty on those who are thus subjected to a peculiar responsibility.

Character is in a great measure the offspring of circumstances. The action and results of principles are greatly modified by circumstances. In order to employ principles in such a manner as to secure their intended results, we must ascertain the nature and influence of the circumstances which affect their action. The men who, in one age of the world, shew themselves under a certain aspect because necessarily moulded by the pressure of the age, would become of a wholly different stamp if subjected to the impressions of a later period; and the principles, whose action, being opposed by or combined with that of a certain state of society, leads to unhappy results, might become, in another state of society, the spring of all that is generous and great. Accordingly it has been remarked, that the Puritan character, though such as could be formed only beneath christian influences, is yet a character which will never appear again upon earth, because the very peculiar circumstances of that astonishing period can never be precisely repeated. Every period has its own circumstances modifying in some way the operation of universal principles, and thus producing a character of its own; every subdivision or subordinate circle in society modifies it still farther, and produces another variety of the general character.

He that is wise, seeks to ascertain what are these circumstances, and to use them or thwart them in such

manner as shall bring about the best result on his own character. Every wise community will do the same.

Let us look at the Unitarian community, with this reference to the circumstances in which it is placed. What has it assumed as the universal principles of truth and duty, and how is their practical operation affected by the posture of the times, and what are the peculiar obligations thence resulting? I could not answer these questions in a volume; in this tract I only pretend to hint at an answer.

In respect to *principles*, what is most worthy of observation seems to me this: — it professes to have adopted as the universal principles of truth and duty, those fundamental everlasting principles, which are received by all christians as the basis and substance of their faith, and which comprise the essence of all religion, morality and philosophy. The process by which these principles are arrived at, is very simple. It has, in following out the doctrines of the great Lutheran Reform, stricken off from its list of theological articles those which were *peculiar* to the Romish church, and had made that church distinctively what it was; — then, it removed those which formed the *peculiarities* of the Lutheran and the Calvinistic bodies; then it set aside those which were peculiar to the church of England and the kirk of Scotland; and, in a word, it excluded whatever, in any one narrow body of believers, formed *the distinctive badge of that body*, — Moravian, Methodist, Baptist, Swedenborgian, &c.; — reserving to itself whatever, by being found in each, was proved to be common in all. All that illustrious and unquestionable truth, which is so divine, so essential, so undeniable, that no one of those numerous companies of the holy and good has been led by any philosophy or in-

terest to withhold assent from it; all that glorious and comforting doctrine, which brings to consent and sympathy the purified spirits of our Paschals, Leightons, Doddridges, Wesleys, Cappes, and Penns, — this, separated from all accompanying admixtures, is that truth which the Unitarian community professes to receive as the binding, authoritative, guide to the human soul. This is that to which the study of the scriptures, unbiassed by the authority of ages or of churches, naturally conducts. It places those who receive it at once in harmony with all the diversities of the church as regards the essentials of religion, and in contrast to them as regards the non-essentials. As if the sacred metal of truth having been coined up for current use by the different christian people, with various proportions and qualities of alloy, *this* people had proposed to separate from it and cast away those meaner ingredients, and receive in circulation none but the original and unadulterated.

This is the IDEA. This is what they profess to desire, and to aim after. This is the image of full attainment, the mark of the high calling in christian doctrine, which is set up before us. Not that it has ever been reached; not that in any community among us this great perfection has been realized. Far from it. It is the glorious aim of many, but probably the actual attainment of none. And when we consider how glorious it is, and what incitements we have to strive after it, it is mortifying and humbling to observe how far short of it even they fall, who have the clearest perception of its grandeur and excellence.

Indeed, is it not too true, that the very process of mind through which this pure faith is to be sought and attained, — the process of comparing and discussing, and dis-

criminating, and sifting, — is in some respects unfavorable to a due appreciation of its worth when attained? For it is the unhappy consequence of controversy to exaggerate the importance of the disputed doctrines; to draw to them a disproportionate attention, to give to them an undue prominence; and to dismiss from their proper place in the thoughts, those which ought to be the predominating and regulating truths. There is no doubt that it has so happened in the case before us. Strongly as men have been persuaded that the *common* and not the *disputed* truths are of essential and vital moment, yet as it is the *disputed* which have necessarily been kept prominent during the long discussion, the feelings have been too much kept hovering about them, and prevented from fervently dwelling on the verities of acknowledged supremacy. Thus it is easy to see how the habit may arise of rejoicing with ardent sincerity in the possession of this light, and yet devoting more thought to what is undoubtedly of inferior moment.

Herein, I must remark by the way, is one of the infelicities under which this particular controversy has laid, beyond most of those which have agitated the christian world. It has turned upon points of philological interpretation and metaphysical discrimination, which, however they may satisfy the head, have little in them to excite the fervors of the heart; and yet, being connected with all those holiest words and ideas about which the heart ought to have its deepest fervors, has directly tended to check and chill its natural warmth. Not so was it in some of the other remarkable contests of the church; not such the points for which Methodism contended, and the Quietists and Quakers suffered. They fell on other days

and were thrown into other channels of thought, which did less to separate the subjects of their debate from those of their rightful affection; and in this were they more happy than we. I do not say it to excuse our remissness; God forbid! but to point out one unhappy circumstance of the times, to the hurtful influence of which we ought to be keenly alive.

To return then to the point from which I may seem to have been departing; — never was it given to a company of believers to be united by constitution or bond so dignified and admirable as this, when understood according to its true idea. It is the naked heart, the inmost core of christian truth, separated from every addition with which human ignorance, error, ambition, or superstition had connected it. A famous sect of philosophers there anciently was, who thought to arrive at true wisdom by selecting from all the schools what seemed truest in each, and uniting them in a new system. But the purpose of these modern Eclectics is better still, — to reject what is peculiar to each school, and retain that radical and seminal central truth, which Christ proclaimed from heaven; — to bow to no human wisdom, be led by no finite will, governed by no fallible authority, — but to be free, absolutely and unreservedly, from all constraint upon thought, inquiry, conscience, faith, except the constraint of the revealed Word, and the willing allegiance of the conscientious mind. It is impossible for imagination to conceive a more sublime position for man or angel, in earth or heaven, than this, — that of a spirit erect and independent, owning no control but that of the Being which made it, and to Him and his will surrendered without reserve.

This is the result to which the sublime principles of the Reformation conduct. Those principles insist on freedom of thought, liberty of conscience, the right of private judgment, independence of human control, in the strictest sense. They permit and require every man to inquire of the scriptures and decide for himself; — with unqualified submission to God, with absolute independence of man. That denomination has most consistently adhered to them, which has thrown away every creed but the Bible, and unseated every judge but Christ.

If I understand the subject aright, this is what Unitarianism claims to have done. What a responsibility does it imply! What honesty of mind, what singleness, directness and stedfastness of will, what resolute allegiance to conscience and God, does it demand of its disciples! It might be excusable for other men to inquire dilatorily for truth, and with an indolent foot follow the path of their convictions; for they have cast a portion of their responsibility upon others, and professedly learn much from human teachers. But for those who claim to be free from the interference of every human mind, to plant their faith and risk their salvation on the word of God alone, — they are guilty of most inexcusable madness, if they stop short at any secondary knowledge, if they do not draw industriously from that infinite fountain, — if they be not as absolutely subjected to God as they are freed from man. For the object of their liberty is not, that they may follow wildly their own momentary and undisciplined impulses, — that they may take up and lay down at pleasure the thoughts and pursuits which expediency may suggest. They are set free from the control of man, as the planets are, that they may the more exactly and blissfully observe

the true orbit appointed by their Maker; they are made free by the truth, that they may obey the truth, by the truth be sanctified, and thus arrive at that only honor which a rational soul should desire, or in which it can find its well being.

Has any one fully realized this great idea in his own mind and history? Is there any ONE who has been thus gloriously true to his trust? Let us believe that there have been many such. We think that we have known them, — some, shining out illustriously to brighten and shame the world, — some, in the humblest retirements of life, to call forth the admiration and eulogy of the few who see them there, and who marvel that God should not have placed them on high among men. Let us hope that there are many beyond what is supposed, who have arrived at this singular attainment. But does it characterize any *community?* Do we see the Community which bears upon its front the token of this holy and resolute independence, which is imbued throughout with this heavenward and indefeasible allegiance to conscience, unswayed by human opinions, reputation and fashion, consecrated to duty, and sacrificing to duty all selfish and worldly ends? Do we see the Community, which has so thrown off the dominion of man, that it is led neither in its opinions nor its practices by the fluctuating standard of the popular breath, but is palpably to the supreme and unbending law of God? I think not. Liberty of thought and opinion is strenuously proclaimed; in this proud land it has become almost a wearisome cant; our speeches and journals, religious and political, are made nauseous by the vapid and vain-glorious reiteration. But does it after all, *characterize any community among us?* Is there any one to which

a qualified observer shall point, and say, *There*, opinion is free? On the contrary, is it not a fact, a sad and deplorable fact, that in no land on this earth is the mind more fettered than it is here? that here what we call Public Opinion has set up a despotism, such as exists no where else? Public Opinion — a tyrant, sitting in the dark, wrapt up in mystification and vague terrors of obscurity; deriving power no one knows from whom; like an Asian monarch, unapproachable, unimpeachable, undethronable, perhaps illegitimate, — but irresistible in its power to quell thought, to repress action, to silence conviction, — and bringing the timid perpetually under an unworthy bondage of mean fear to some impostor opinion, some noisy judgment which gets astride on the popular breath for a day, and controls, through the lips of impudent folly, the speech and actions of the wise.

From this influence and rule, from this bondage to opinion, no community, as such, is free, though doubtless individuals are. But your community, Brethren, based on the principles which you profess, is bound to be so. Each for himself in faith, each for all in action; men to be loved and served, but not to be followed or obeyed; no master but Christ, no Father but God; — these are your maxims. Man seems something more than human when these principles are stated; — but he becomes something less, if, professing them in form, he falsify them in fact.

As I am writing this, my eye is caught by the motto which stand upon the cover of one of your periodical journals. "*Liberty, Holiness, Love.*" It seems to have been assumed as descriptive of the objects which you are to keep in view, and the character which you are to form. They are well chosen words. They constitute a beauti-

ful and harmonious trio, whose blended hues, whose vigorous co-action, delineate and describe what the Christian Church should be, what the Christian Truth should produce. Is it not the purpose of the truth "to make free;" and where the spirit of the Lord is, is there not liberty? Is it not the province of the truth to "sanctify?" And doth it not "work by love?" Every one that has been wrought upon by its power, *knows* that such are its effects. And where it has brought out the church from its more than Egyptian bondage to earth and sense and man, from the degrading slavery of sin into the liberty of the sons of God; where it has raised it up by its celestial energy, to a thorough Holiness; — and filled it with that Love to God and men, which is the substance of religion on earth, and the essential spirit of heaven; then has it not done its errand, has it not accomplished its mission? It augurs well therefore for any church or body of men, that it will take this for its watchward, and hang it out as an ensign to rally by in the face of the world. It describes what ought to be the spirit of the christian world. God grant it may prove to be your spirit!

But it must not only be hung out from your walls, or blazoned on your armor, or written on the foreheads of your priests. It must be engraven on the living tablets of your hearts. It must be a deeply felt sentiment of your inmost souls. It must be the earnest voice of your resolute spirits, day and night, continually prompting to thoughts, words, deeds, that correspond. It must be the inwrought character of your private lives, and the evident character of your churches, as well as the motto of your books.

Liberty as I have already said, you have mostly achieved and you jealously prize. But what if some should esteem

it a license from holiness, and a commission to hate whom they please? The thing is not impossible; and I say, see to it, that no one among you allow in himself, nor encourage in another, this lamentable self-deception. You had better be suffering all the horrors of the middle passage, without hope of redemption or end, than walk abroad in the semblance of free men, and yet be slaves to selfishness and lust. Your religion has been bestowed on you, that you might do therewith a great work of moral advancement for yourselves and for your fellow-men. Jesus Christ hath smitten off your chains, that you may go and do that work unhindered. And now, to boast of your light, your privileges, your deliverance from superstition and priestcraft, while you live a corrupt and selfish life, is but proving yourselves the fit subjects for a heavier bondage, and the discipline of a more mortifying restraint.

What therefore, I ask, are you doing in this day of your privilege? What sort of men is it that you are permitting yourselves to be? What sort of churches of the Lord Jesus are you setting up in the world? Now that you have been set apart from the body of the believing world, and made to stand forth by yourselves as representatives of the Gospel, it is as if a message from the Lord had come to you, and bid you inquire and know what sort of representatives you are.

Cast a scrutinizing glance, — not cursory, not partial, — look faithfully, look deep, — *for if ye will judge yourselves ye shall not be judged*, — upon all the multiform congregations among you; — make the charitable allowance, which you may, which you ought, for the humors of the time, and for the untoward influences of a broken age; — think justly on the countervailing advantages by

which, in some portions of your community, you are signalized; — survey your whole land, from Dan to Beersheba, from your Jerusalem to the desert and the sea; — ponder soberly the condition in which you find it; — penetrate intently and profoundly into your own heart, try your own character, and search out and note down your own springs of action and purposes of existence; — and then say, — Is the state of religion what it should be among such a people? have christian faith and immortal truth that commanding influence which they should have? Is this people marked by a scrupulousness and high-minded conscientiousness, by an all controlling regard to the divine will, by eager, hearty and self-denying activity in behalf of other men? Is the spirit of the Gospel their spirit, and the life of Jesus their pattern, and do they show themselves as devotedly resolved to be free from selfishness and wrong, as to be free from creeds and human authority.

I feel that this would be a trying inquisition. No church on the face of the earth ever did or could abide it without shrinking and shame. Neither can that to which I put it now. It touches to the quick. It reveals fearful deficiencies. Yet it must be made; and wo to the man or the body of men, that would refuse to look at it honestly, and that would shun the investigation, for the sake of present peace. Let every man open his eyes. If there be error, let him see it. If there be wrong, let him acknowledge it. If there be danger, let him not sleep over it, but manfully rise up, proclaim it, and begin the war against it. Nothing is so fatal as an unwillingness to know ourselves. Nothing so shameful as voluntarily to be ignorant of ourselves. Let us know the worst; we shall then be prepared for the worst. Let us

know the truth; we shall then not perish by falsehood and delusion.

I do not pursue these inquiries. They belong to the decision of a higher tribunal, whose awful judgment it is not for man to anticipate. Yet we do know, — for God has not concealed it from us, — on what grounds that judgment will proceed, and we cannot affect to be ignorant of the grounds on which our own opinion should be made up. We know what character God requires of men and of nations; we understand perfectly what manner of religion that is, which satisfies the description of the New Testament. And no man is so stupid, that he shall not be able to say, if he will, whether that religion rules his own heart, and pervades the society in which he moves. It is a religion, which may be described in a few strong words better than in volumes. It is a religion, not of passion, not of forms, not of profession, not of decencies, not of words, not of fancy. It is not reverie, nor speculation, nor political craft, nor good policy. It is a stern, inflexible principle of Truth and Duty, which swerves not from right, and has no patience with wrong; — an unblenching Faith in God, which sees and trusts his hand in everything, and trusts no second cause, independently of Him; — and a philanthropic purpose to do good to men, which no coldness, nor ingratitude, nor scorn of the worldly and prudent can check or abate. It is the conscientious devotion of the affections and the life to the service of God and man, as that which alone becomes a being whose existence is never to end. This is the religion which heavenly truth produces. Does it act on some individual? It makes him severely yet cheerfully faithful

to every relation and trust, not because he is a citizen of earth, but because he has an immortal nature. Or on a community? It makes it full of righteousness and peace, where God is more regarded than man, and therefore man is made more blessed than elsewhere because he is God's child.

This is the religion, which, for our own sake, for the world's sake, we must labor to establish, and without which our wisdom is but folly and our zeal but idle breath. We may demonstrate the sublimest theories, may proclaim the soundest faith, may utter the voice of angels; but if it do not come to this result, it is all but sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. And this result can only spring from *the vigorous action of the truth, through the medium of its established institutions.*

At no period of the world was it ever more important to insist on the necessity of thus sustaining the Institutions of the Gospel. Never were they more endangered, or their holy influences more put in jeopardy, than by the hazardous experiments, and rash and worldly confidence, and various divisions, of these unsettled and broken times. The agitations of society have disturbed the foundations and weakened the strength of the churches in all parts of the land, and threatened some of them even with extinction. In many humble and impoverished parishes, numbers are few, means are small, and the Gospel is costly. It is an alarming problem yet to be solved, what shall be done to keep alive the fire on those lesser altars; and now that the law has forsaken the church door in this as well as in the other States, a new era has arrived, when the wise must contrive how the Gospel shall be supported among the thinly scattered and

feeble, so that its light shall continue to burn, and our children of the coming generations shall be born to the enjoyment of the christian worship. Let those who are able, devise; let the favored and wealthy be ready to contribute; let all ponder and pray; — and God forbid, that, through our remissness, one cottage shall remain upon our blessed fields, whose inmates are beyond the reach of the Sabbath-bell and the pulpit exhortation. There are some who do not feel this aright; — some, blessed by God with property as well as liberty, who fancy that both are for themselves only, and who meanly withdraw from the support of his worship. There are congregations made up, in considerable part, of men who are more willing to live without the preaching of the Word, than to tax themselves so much for the means of salvation as they do for sugar in their tea, or for needless ornaments on the dress of their daughters. This is a crying enormity. No one who values religion, can refuse the little sacrifice which would be necessary for its support. Better give up half the luxuries of civilized life, than suffer the public means of religion to decay. Those luxuries may be spared, and no suffering will ensue. But if religious institutions cease, barbarism and profaneness will come over the land, and the happy charities of life perish. And certainly, in these days of abundance and growing ease, — when persecution is known but in name, and suffering for Christ's sake is a thing only of history, — it is an inconceivable meanness to refuse the little self-denial which would enable one to double the former parish-tax, and, instead of this, to pay over to the dancing master or the milliner, the few dollars which might ensure the preaching of the Gospel.

The avarice and selfishness of the nominal, the worldly, the indifferent, and the unbelieving, and the subdivisions of sectarian zeal which multiply churches by dividing worshippers, have seriously affected the regular means of supporting religious institutions. But what then? They must none the less, — rather the more, — be supported; and it presents a fresh opportunity to the faithful to evince their attachment to the truth by some extra effort in its behalf. Many have so regarded it, and have met the emergency with alacrity, have exhibited the most praiseworthy readiness, and poured out bountifully to satisfy the demands of the times. Let them receive a hearty tribute of applause for their faithful work. But let a decided and open expression of disapprobation and contempt be awarded to those selfish worldlings, who count their shillings more dear than instruction, and can afford themselves any luxury but that of going to church. Let a severer rebuke await those arrogant and despicable impostors, (of whom it is said there are some, though surely they must be few,) who make a boast of their enlightenment, and presume to take on their lips the advocacy of liberal truth, and yet close their hearts against all appeals for aid in spreading and sustaining the light they glory in. Truly, the light of such men is but darkness, — darkness that may be felt. They are strangers to the truth which they profess to know; and, loud as they talk, if they could have their way, it would cease in another generation to shine upon the world.

It is not easy to use a gentler word in reference to those, who, with the same confidence in their own superior light, yet absent themselves one half the time from the worship which they support. These are mostly your luxurious

citizens, your genteel religionists, who go to church for example's sake, and because religion is an excellent thing for the poor ; who kneel on cushions of down and confess their sins in all attitudes of languor and grace ; — great admirers of beautiful style and poetical imagery ; — who divide their religious feelings between the sermon of the morning, and the dinner of the noonday, and the conversation or slumbers of the afternoon. This race of accommodating christians is principally the growth of larger towns, and may be found in all our cities patronising the fashionable church, — no matter what the denomination may chance to be. It flourishes well among those whose weeks are given to amusement. It exhibits its striking sense of the contrast which should exist between religion and the world, by the crowded condition of its cotillion rooms, and the emptiness of its churches. Doubtless it would be too much to expect of those who are wearied out with the pleasures of the week, that they should have spirit or strength to worship God as much on Sunday as common people who have no such weighty cares ; it would be unreasonable to require them in the afternoon to attend church, when they can hardly find time to get through their courses and drink their wine. In every great city, there are a few congregations, composed of these privileged persons, these lights of the world, these patterns and benefactors of society, who have made such advancement in religion, that it is wholly unnecessary for them to worship God on Sunday afternoon, and their ministers have the opportunity of looking without interruption directly upon the rich caparisons of their elegant pews. They would probably not think it perfectly fair that he also should leave the church, and dis-

appoint the few who venture to do so vulgar a thing as keep him countenance in the worship of God; he must adhere to the fashion of preaching all day, just as much as they to their fashion of leaving him to preach alone.

It unfortunately happens, that this practice, selfish and indecent as it is, and inconsistent with all right views of the object of public worship, is yet, — alas, for the corrupting power of thoughtless fashion! — easily embraced by many who not only mean well in general, but who rightfully make some pretensions to religion. *But in vain will you look to see religion flourish where this vice is prevalent.* In vain will you expect that those will do much or care much for its purity and influence, who manifest so little interest in its institutions, — who statedly, purposely, habitually, allow themselves in that practice, which if general, would be the overthrow of public religious observances. Let it be especially noted, — as what concerns especially the topics before us, — that in these days of progressive reform, when in religion, as in all things else, old customs cease to be revered, and a departure from them is thought to be *of course* an improvement, — when, "liberty" being the watch-word, the multitude are easily made to fancy that constancy is bondage, and to suppose that they advance into light just in proportion as they recede from their fathers or their old fashioned neighbors, — under such circumstances, it is necessary that special effort be made to retain a sober reverence for the house of God and his worship; that, in fact, uncommon pains be taken in every possible way to strengthen the habit of regarding them as sacred and divine. We are lost, — I speak with solemn deliberation, — we are lost, and our power to benefit and advance great principles is gone, whenever we shall encourage or

permit the public means of religion to be slighted. And no more mistaken or false friend to the cause of human liberty and improvement can be found, than he, whose conduct in this respect makes men think that he personally feels no interest in it, and whose example directly tends but to quench that interest in others. The cause of Episcopacy never was much promoted by those splendid buildings in which the boasted liturgy is read every Sunday afternoon to empty seats. Methodism never spread itself by the agency of men whose hearts allowed them to prefer a dinner to a sermon. It was not such men that introduced, or helped to introduce, the Gospel, or started the Reformation; and we may depend upon it, that those will have no share in the completion of that glorious reformation, however they may boast, who cast personal slight on the worship and preaching by which it is to be brought about.

I am aware that all this applies to but a small class; but it serves none the less to illustrate my positions, and it may indirectly give admonition to others. I am aware also, that all this relates but to the *means* of religion; but without the means, who will venture to guaranty the *end?* There are, I know, a few mystical, speculative men, who are possessed with the fancy that not themselves only, but that the world, has outgrown these leading-strings; who make light of all instrumental help; and who thus, — with a good, but most mistaken intent, — virtually join the scoffer in sapping the foundations of religion. It is enough to give a passing word to this. It is the error and sickness of the times, threatening serious disasters; for where one thoughtful and safe man lays aside this wholesome attachment to institutions, instruments, and helps, weaker men will do it in multitudes,

and will shelter their indolence, worldliness, and selfishness, like their more enlightened brethren, beneath the plea of a spirituality which needs not the nourishment of these beggarly elements. It is one of the perils of the times. Let the strong watchmen be awake to it. Let them not cease day nor night to cry out against it with a loud and alarming cry. Let them suffer none to sleep under the fatal notion that religion will grow up of itself in their hearts, without the culture which God and nature have ordained; or that a great truth will prevail because it is great, without any care to guard and enforce it. Let them pour scorn on these puerile and superficial conceits. Let them strangle this idle and mischievous folly. Let them silence those who profanely pretend a special trust in God and his ways, while in practice they contemn his purposes and neglect the way of his commandment. If this great work for the perfection of christianity and of men is to be done, it must be done by men, putting in operation the necessary means. If you do not take your share in it, — no matter what your plea, — you will share none of the honor promised to those who do it, — — you will taste the bitter shame ordained for those who hinder it. If you fancy yourself already too enlightened to require the further aid of times and ordinances, the greater cause for using and honoring them, that you may bring others to the same advanced state. If you are sure that the great cause is in triumphant progress, the greater the reason that you should not hold back, but, if you love it, should "pursue the triumph and partake the gale." If you think it by any thing encumbered, hindered, thwarted, the greater the cause that you should be awake and active, — removing obstacles, encouraging

friends, and swelling the tide of men and measures which is to sweep away the impediments of truth.

It will be said by some, "Let the people be truly interested in religion, and they will both support and attend its institutions. Make them religious, — that is what you have to do; until then, you in vain call for their contributions, or expect them to be present in the church." Undoubtedly, this would be a remedy for all backwardness. The truly devoted will spare neither their money nor their time. But how are men to *become* thus devoted? Are we to use no means to render them so, until they are already such? Are we to be told that there is no motive to bring men within christian influences, short of that absorbing religious feeling, which would show that the work is already nearly done? Certainly not; there are other motives, powerful motives. It as much pertains to good citizenship as to piety, to take care that public worship be supported; and multitudes of those, who are at present indifferent and worldly, think of it reverently and well, and intend by and by to be sanctified by it. All these are to be entreated to preserve their obligations; they are to be called on as patriots and friends of social order and peace, to prevent the downfal of these powerful seminaries of moral instruction. But I have more particularly in view another class, — those, already referred to who count themselves the subjects of a glorious emancipation, the participators of a great light, and who freely use words of self-congratulation. They are, or profess to be, keenly alive to a sense of mental degradation, and are perfectly aware of the great privilege they enjoy in the light and liberty of the present era. They are very honestly ready to thank God that they are not as other men, — members of churches, which fetter them by hu-

man confessions and bind them to make no advance in their apprehensions of spiritual truth. Now is it decent for such men, — who not only enjoy great privileges, but show that they are aware of it, — is it decent for them to withdraw their support from the institutions which guaranty their peculiar advantages? Is it consistent or becoming in them to forsake the churches, which they assert to resound with the purest doctrine? to doom to poverty the preachers, whom they believe to be the most enlightened apostles of God's word, and to discourage the eloquent asserters of the most important views which have dawned upon the earth? I address these questions to a *select class*, which it is mortifying to say has an existence, but which, God be praised! is as small as it is arrogant and false. I address their sense of shame, their sense of dignity, their love of consistency, their magnanimity, their intelligence, their hope of immortality, their faith in a future reckoning.

If all who profess to honor religion were religious men, there would indeed be no call for expostulation or entreaty, on behalf of religion. But alas, the inconsistency of believers with their profession, is an evil as old and as notorious as the existence of the church itself. The solemn and indignant questions of Paul in his second chapter to the Romans, have been equally applicable to multitudes in every age since; and it is more matter of grief than astonishment, that they still apply to many of our own day. The increase of light is with them rather a cause for glorying, than a call to duty. They with great complacency rest in their light, and make their boast in God, and know his will, and approve the things that are more excellent, and yet through unfaithfulness to their light, they dishonor God. They live respectable

lives of worldly decorum, but have no spirituality of affection, no desire for excellence beyond the ordinary mark, no conception of anything more pure and disinterested than the average of decent society has presented to their view. Their standard is low, their tastes sensual, their principle inactive, their wisdom earthly and sensual, though not perhaps devilish. They live decently, but only for themselves and for this world. They would be very sorry to be accounted other than friends of religion, but they would be greatly ashamed to be pointed out as pious men. They are proud of the dignity of their intellectual nature, and do not doubt the immortality of their souls; but nothing is further from their intention or desire, than to occupy their minds now with the subjects which they suppose are to occupy their future immortality.

There is a lamentable deficiency in our practical apprehension of what are the requisitions of our religion. We do not see, feel, realize, the extent and strictness of its obligations. With all our getting, we have not got a spiritual understanding of its admirable and glorious purpose. We are yet in the alphabet of christian attainment; we are of the earth, earthy. Who is there, that in his best hours of serious contemplation, has not been made deeply to deplore this? Let me not be met with the cry that there is such a thing as being righteous over-much; nor let the old saying be turned against me, "Physician, heal thyself, — practise, instead of preaching." No one has such a claim to be heard in denouncing an evil, as he who can tell of it from personal experience; no man's warning is so good as his who can show how himself and his friends are suffering. There is a great dislike to austerity, a great dread of puritanism, a horror of cant and

fanaticism and superstition; and one cannot recommend a stricter devotion, or a more scrupulous morality, than the ordinary customs of the world make requisite, without the risk of being branded by the more worldly as an enthusiast or a hypocrite, and being told by many of the more serious, "that it is too late in the day, that this preciseness and scrupulosity were well enough formerly, but that the spirit of the times forbids it now; *nous avons changè tout cela;* it is vain to think of carrying men back to modes of thought which are long obsolete, and to habits of devout observance which savor more of the cloister than of the world."

Let us admit the changes which have taken place, and which render it requisite to abandon modes of operation and address and observance, which are no longer adapted to accomplish their design. But human nature has not changed; the christian religion has not changed; the institutions of God have not changed; — there may be a diversity of operations, but there is the same God who speaks, the same truth for the instrument, the same nature to be wrought upon. The requisitions of that God are as rigidly conformable to the eternal and uncompromising law of right, as they ever were; the path of sentiment and life to which truth would lead, is no whit less strait and direct; the nature to be perfected, is accessible to the same and to no different principles and motives, and is to be moulded into the same character. Surely, that the christian character is to be inferior in moral elevation, that it is to have less of spirituality and self-sonsecration to principle, less of the Christlike, and the Godlike, than in other days, will not be pretended. What it was in the days of Jesus, such it is now; such as it showed itself in his example, such it must be in the

lives of his followers at the present time. To make it less disinterested, less unworldly, less scrupulously averse from all contamination of impunity and all suspicion of wrong, would be to make it another thing than the christian character. To make it more compatible with a heart devoted to ambition and gain, with a life of thoughtlessness, frivolity and uselessness, — to make it synonymous with self-interest, and the decent external proprieties of civilized life, — would be to change its definition from that which its master gave to it. To make it of so pliable a texture, of so flexible and complying a disposition, that it shall be consistent with any degree of selfishness and worldliness which does not destroy a man's reputation; with any devotedness to luxury and folly, or any modes or forms of business which are not discreditable; with any absorption in useless fancies, indolent indulgences, or money-making cares, which are not absolutely injurious to society; or, in a word, with all and any character of heart and life, which does not offend against human law, or honor, or fashion; — is to make it a convenient tool for human depravity, instead of an infallible guide to celestial purity. And yet, we are perfectly aware, that there are men of all these sorts of characters, who deem their lives very sufficiently religious; and who are indignant against the austerity and uncharitableness of any definition of the christian life, which would put in jeopardy their empty self-complacency.

There must be some standard; — and it cannot require to be proved, that it must be a peculiar one, — a high one, — an inflexible one; — a standard, which will not vary to accommodate itself to different states of society, or different dispositions of individuals; but which, like him who established it, is the same yesterday, today, and

forever ; — making the true disciple of the first century, the same, in all essential and characteristic features, with the consistent christian of the middle ages and these latter days ; in things indifferent granting a privilege to human imperfection ; but, in the vital spirit, the essential elements, the absolute characteristics, demanding imperatively an absolute and undeviating conformity.

The great danger is that of admitting too lax a standard. The world is always encroaching upon it, and the weakness of the human heart gives way. It may be that the figure is too strong, which represents the Christian character as a fire burning from out of the ocean, which can exist in the midst of so contrary an element only by perpetual miracle ; but certainly there are counteracting impulses, principles, and opinions in the world, perpetual effort necessary on the part of the christian to sustain the liveliness and purity of his faith ; there are influences from society, from example, from without and from within, which tend constantly to secularize his feelings, to bring down the tone of his affections and convictions, to dull his susceptibility to truth and purity. The crying danger is that of admitting too low a standard. Many a man, — who has learned what human virtue should be from the study of the scriptures and devout communion with God, and who, in the private contemplations of his early days, has suffered his imagination to draw pictures of the good people whom he was hereafter to meet in the world, — has found, on entering life, that his notions were far above the actual standard of good men, that his idea of the prevalent religion was too beautiful for the christianity of Christians, was an image of something not to be seen in the world ; he has found them shaking their heads at him with a wise and meaning smile, as they in-

formed him that his notions of goodness were impracticable, that they would do for the closet, but not for those who know the world and must live among men. At first he is disappointed, shocked and mortified; but he gradually becomes accustomed to so lamentable a state of things, acquiesces in it as unavoidable, and comes by and by to have his enthusiasm as thoroughly cooled, and his ardor for perfect goodness as completely turned into discreet caution, and his charity as carefully guarded by selfishness, as the older men about him.

It has been the disgrace of christians, that they have not stood out against this worldly tendency, and kept themselves up to their own temperature in spite of the cold atmosphere of society. If their souls had imbibed the full vitality of their religion, if they had been filled with the spirit of its life, they would have found in themselves the power of resistance, just as they find it in their bodies. The mysterious principle of organic life imparts to the body a sustaining energy, which keeps the vital heat invariably the same; — though all around be chill, it remains unaltered; and Providence has afforded means of aiding it to preserve this temperature which protects it from distraction. When *the soul truly lives*, it possesses a similar power of resistance to external influence. The world may operate upon it, the moral atmosphere of society may close around it with its deadliest influences; — but it has the power of resistance, it may retain its own standard; and God, by his word and spirit, has made provision of means by which, in any extremity of exposure, it may be completely protected. If men will not use those means, if they will not clothe themselves in the protecting dress of watchfulness and prayer, they will lose in the world the warmth of their devotional natures,

and cease to enjoy the full health of the immortal soul. It is the disgrace of christians that it has so often been the case with them. Some, many, have wrapt themselves in their principles of holiness, and refused to give place for a moment to earthly solicitation or example, and thus have exhibited illustrious instances of the beauty and excellence of christianity. But alas, others, too many, have conformed themselves to the world, — they have dreaded to be singular, — they have been ashamed to be better than others, — they have thus lost both the influence with others and the peace within themselves, which they might and ought to have possessed. Hence it is that society is not more thoroughly christianized. The friends of christianity have gone to the world, instead of insisting that the world should come to them. They have weakly given way. They have failed of presenting that dignified and resolute adherence to the convictions of conscience, that unhesitating, immovable devotedness to grand and immortal principles, which their infinite importance deserves. Nothing less than such devotedness could persuade a worldly-minded man, that they actually believed in their reality and eternity. How could he be persuaded, that those men loved supremely a better and immortal life, who were as eager and unprincipled as others in the struggles of this? How could religion gain ground in the world, when advocated by men who were constantly qualifying and modifying the requisitions of their faith, to suit a sensual and worldly taste, and accommodate their own temporal interests?

There is no more serious mistake than the idea of promoting the interests of religion by diminishing its strictness, and thus bribing the favor of the world. The world is not to be so bribed. It sees through and despises

the shallow manœuvre. None understand better than your most devoted worldlings, the essential incompatibility between their spirit and the spirit of Christ, and they feel nothing but contempt for the weakness which thinks to attain their suffrages by softening down the requisitions of the eternal law. They can read and understand what the Lord requires of them, and their consciences compel them to admire its unapproachable purity. They feel for it something of the reverence and awe, which it is suited to impress on every intelligent mind. And when they perceive its guardians and friends so insensible or so faithless to its claims, as to press upon men something inferior in its stead, they view them as traitors, and instead of embracing, on their invitation, a cause which is thus unfaithfully dealt with, they turn with contempt and loathing from the false-hearted men. The cowardly and short-sighted policy has repelled from christianity the very men it was designed to conciliate and win.

Christianity is designed to produce a great effect upon men and the world. But not a mixed, adulterated, mitigated christianity. It produces its effects by *what it is*. Change it, and its power ceases; make it something else, and its operations are no longer the same. Say that instead of going down into the bottom of the soul, and taking possession of the whole man, and informing his entire spirit and character, it is sufficient that it regulate his exterior deportment and restrain him from the grosser sins, — you alter its character; — it is no longer what Christ taught, and it can no longer produce the effects which he proposed. It will excite a feeble interest, it will awaken a feeble emotion, it will therefore call forth slight exertion, and will end in a feeble virtue. Little will be felt, little therefore attempted, very little accom-

plished. Make the way very broad and easy, and many will walk in it; but whither will it lead them? There can be nothing of the striving, the earnestness, the energy, by which alone great characters are formed, and great enterprises achieved, and an exalted virtue reached. It is not the languor of an easy path which elevates and perfects; we must enter in by a strait gate, we must strive through a narrow path; we must seize the kingdom of heaven by violence. We must feel that everything is at stake, and then we shall be ready to attempt every thing. Make our way so easy that nothing shall seem to be at stake, and we shall attempt nothing.

It is perfectly true, and Gibbon was right when he said it, though the unhappy man did it maliciously, — that Christianity gained on the world and flourished at the beginning through its very sternness and austerity. It was uncompromising in its strictness, and thus compelled attention, respect, admiration, awe, roused vehement feeling, and forced the homage and allegiance of men. And so it has been in all ages since. The severest forms, the straitest sects, have always had the most resolute followers, have always left the strongest, deepest and most permanent impressions on the world. The looser sects have had their votaries, but they have not exercised the greatest power, nor done so much to decide the fortunes of the world. Even at the present day, when monkish austerity is wholly out of vogue, and all superstitious strictness derided, yet now, the more of rational severity of doctrine a sect upholds, the more peremptorily it exalts the standard of religious character, the more sure it is to receive the homage of the multitude, and to commend itself to the thinking friends of society and men. This is agreeable to human nature; —

so much so, that in all ages and all religions, it has been the pretence of universal sanctity, the show and inculcation of a holier and mortified life, upon which the fanatical or ambitious founders of sects have built their success. The most absurd and ridiculous doctrines, have thus been recommended. But what sect is to be named, which has signally prospered by an opposite policy and a looser doctrine? — unless indeed by such a degree of laxity as has become freedom from all moral restraint, and has thus destroyed its pretence to be called a religious body. It is idle to think that it may be otherwise now. The world is said to be more intelligent; society is cultivated and refined. But unless religion be absolutely discarded, men still believe in its exalted purity and holiness; and that form of religion will command the surest homage and do the best work, which shall offer the severest standard of moral and spiritual attainment, alike free from timid concession to the spirit of the world, and from weak tendency to fanaticism and superstition; in other words, which shall succeed most truly in representing the character of Christ; — as bold, as unflinching in principle as he, yet as gentle, as amiable, and as free from all extravagance and eccentricity.

This, I say to those whom I address, is what you are to desire and aim at. You might as well be no christians at all, as to be satisfied with anything less than this. You might as well abandon all hope of progress and prosperity now, as struggle on hoping to succeed by a power of personal religion less than this. Nothing less than this is the christian character; and neither human nature, nor the providence of God, nor the spirit of grace, will permit any satisfactory attainments to be made in goodness, by those who would substitute some other stan-

dard of goodness for that of the Christian Scriptures. No such attempt can succeed. Nothing but true principle can create true virtue. If you think to render the true principle more palatable to men or better adapted to them, by diluting it down to the taste of the worldly, you change it from what it is, you destroy precisely that which constitutes its efficiency, namely, its truth, and thus you render it the same in effect as falsehood. Christianity cannot be made this accommodating system without ceasing to be Christianity.

It is necessary, then, to insist on a high and uncompromising standard. It were a poor thing to contend for a religion which bends to our tastes, conforms to our habits, humors our prejudices, and connives at our selfishness. All these we might have without a religious system as well as with it. No doctrine is worth a rational regard, which will not *do something* for us, — which will not lift us out of ourselves and above the world, and transform us in the renewing of our minds, and make us fully conformed to the holy, acceptable and perfect will of God. Pure and undefiled religion, says the apostle James, consists in *Holiness* and *Love;* it is to "visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keep one's self unspotted from the world." Our faith is worth little to us, if it do not effect this. We may glory in it as we please; it is but a worthless name, if it do not issue in purity and philanthropy, — if it do not work by love and purify the heart. We may argue for it with what power of demonstration we please, we may eulogize it as with the tongues of angels; if it have not wrought in us the great transformation which Christ designed, if it do not prove its divinity by its effects on character, who will heed the tones of admiration in which we laud it? who will credit our sincerity?

I would ask, with all humility and earnestness, whether the community is awake to these considerations? We need not overlook the disadvantages of its position. We may make due allowance for the encumbrances and drawbacks which result from the circumstances under which it has come into existence, and from the heterogeneous character which has been imparted to it by the confusion and troubles of the times. To these circumstances I have adverted on a former page; they are such as to demand a charitable judgment and cadid allowance, which will by many be denied them. But make what allowance may be reasonable, still, if circumstances are unpropitious, there is only the more imperative call for exertion in order to surmount them, and to do our duty in spite of them. To yield to them, and to acquiesce in their neutralizing and palsying influences, to suffer them to put to sleep our zeal and philanthropy, would be unpardonable treachery to a great trust. May we abandon a cause because circumstances are adverse? May we labor in it languidly, for the very reason that vehement efforts are requisite in order to its advancement? We have in view one grand object, — namely, to ensure to Christianity its full, its legitimate authority in society and over men. In order to this, we are professedly seeking to extend and complete the Reformation. If there be impediments in any of the circumstances and accidents of the times, they must be strenuously resisted. Every means must be employed, every heart and hand must be engaged. The pulpit must assume a more earnest and stimulating tone, and the press a more determined emphasis, and thus urge home upon the conscience of the community the fervent, bold, persevering expostulations which the sacred importance of the enterprise de-

mands. Every believer must apply himself to the work, and inquire, and talk, and pray, and act, until all arrive at that elevation of the spiritual life, which as yet is only approached, but which must be *arrived at* before a christian community can be fully worthy of its name.

The signs of the times are favorable. The movement has been long begun, and is prosperously going on. May God speed it! Our churches, our sunday schools, our books, and our various organizations for mutual aid and charitable action, are gratifying tokens of advancement; they show that the true spirit is at work; they encourage us to labor and pray for its extension, confident that God will hear our prayer, and that success will reward our labors. Let us then redouble our labors and our prayers. Let us contend valiantly for these practical and spiritual achievements. The times are propitious, all things are ready, there is something for every man to do. Every man has first of all a mighty work to finish in his own character; — he has, in watchfulnes and prayer, to govern and perfect his own spirit, and, in disinterested love, to seek the good of those around him. He has to do his share toward the diffusion of elevated principles, toward giving a Christian tone to the society in which he moves, toward imbuing its conversations, its spirit, its habits, with the purity, gentleness, peacefulness, and love of right, which ought to characterize communities of Christians. Much activity is requisite in order to this end. Very much is to be done to make society what it should be; very much before it will realize the image drawn in the New Testament. It can be effected only by the strenuous fidelity of individual christians; and no one can be accounted guiltless, who neglects by word and example to do all in his power to hasten the desirable consummation.

But individuals cannot do it alone. Their single action will effect something; but it is their combined action only which can bring about the perfect result. And therefore, — if I am asked what is the great lesson of expediency and duty to be drawn from the survey now taken of the position, character, circumstances and relations of this christian community, — I should answer, the imperious necessity of more general and affectionate union and cooperation in the cause of truth and happiness. I should say, you stand in a peculiar posture, you are pledged to a peculiar work, — peculiar and vast; — you are embarrassed by peculiar and multifarious impediments; — and nothing but the loftiest virtue, and the most devoted faith, and the most energetic and unquenchable zeal, will enable you to carry through your work and accomplish what Providence has apparently offered to you to accomplish. Under such circumstances, it is impossible that the single-handed efforts of insulated individuals shall be sufficient. The requisite zeal cannot be kindled, the necessary determination cannot be excited, the needed information cannot be spread, without much communion of mind with mind, much action of heart on heart. You must unite your hearts, your prayers, your strength. You must meet together, and talk about these things; excite, encourage, admonish each other, provoke one another to love and good works. Devotion, in this cold world, needs the cheering stimulus of sympathy; virtue in this tempting world, needs the strength of public countenance; philanthropy, in this selfish world, requires the support and courage of numbers. You must pray together in social circles assembled for the purpose; converse together of your trials, wants and duties, of the demands of the truth, of the necessities of the

church, of the capacities, glories, infirmities, degradation, and destiny of this immortal nature; and thus enkindle a livelier flame of piety, a warmer zeal for truth, a bolder action for charity, and a more eager aspiration after the spiritual life. In order to this end, I know nothing to be more earnestly desired, than the increase of these means of social and mutual religious improvement. The times cry out for them. Wherever adopted, they have been signally blessed. So few have the ability to excite their own souls and set themselves to work, that thousands, when left alone, would sink down to cold inactive selfishness, who, if placed in frequent contact with their fellow-believers, would become generous, ardent, enterprising promoters of every good design.

But whatever may be thought of the *means* that should be employed, there can be no doubtfulness respecting the greatness of the *object*. The hints which I have rudely thrown out on the peculiarities, the hazards, the responsibilities of the present crisis might be extended to a volume, and ought to be written in characters of fire. Weakly as they are here presented, they cannot be wholly without force; and if any man of powerful and earnest mind perceives their justice and urgency, I leave it in charge with him to set them forth in their proper strength, and press them on the attention and conscience of the public. If I can rouse one such mind to speak to the times in the prophet-like tone in which they ought to be addressed, I shall feel that I have not ventured to lift my voice in vain. At any rate I have attempted to perform a duty.

"But all is in His hand, whose praise I seek;
Whose frown can disappoint the proudest strain,
Whose approbation — prosper even mine."

1st Series. No. 100.

DOCTRINAL DISTINCTIONS,

NOT ALWAYS

DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCES.

BY REV. A. B. MUZZY.

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DOCTRINAL DISTINCTIONS,

NOT ALWAYS

DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCES.

Do Christians really differ in their opinions on religious subjects as much as they seem to differ? Is it not attributable far more to supposed diversities of belief than to actual ones, that they are so reluctant to unite in love and fellowship? Could those individuals and sects who think they are most at variance with each other in respect to doctrine, come together and compare their views and enter into mutual explanations, would they not be convinced that in truth there is very little ground for the walls of partition which have so long kept them apart, and that it is high time for them to join heart to heart and hand to hand in forwarding the great practical interests of the gospel? At any rate, would they not be made to see and feel that there is no radical difference of opinion between them which can justify the prejudices and controversies and alienations, that now prevent the peace and harmony of our churches? However this might be, I, for one, am unable to perceive any such radical difference. On the contrary, I believe that in all which concerns the fundamental principles of Christianity, and so far as relates to their views of its legitimate

effects and the spirit it fosters in the soul, all Christians are essentially united, though they may not be aware of it. And this position I would now endeavor to maintain.

1. First, then, let the question be proposed. "*What constitutes the character of a true Christian?*" All will assent to the reply, that it is to "love God with the whole mind, heart and strength; and to love our neighbor as ourselves." But some one may here interpose, — "You believe works are sufficient; you esteem him a Christian who merely acts the part of an honest, amiable, and benevolent man." By no means, I answer. I regard no works as good except those which flow from right principles, that is, which accord with the will of God, whom he always loves who loves supremely truth and duty. That conduct which springs from worldly motives alone, from a mere respect to earthly interests, I view as no part of the Christian character. I then turn to my neighbor with the charge. "But you put your whole trust in faith, apart from good works. Have I not heard from your pulpits and your press, times without number, that religion is an affair of the heart alone? Do you not confine it to some mysterious sentiment termed love to God? Do you not pass by, or underrate exceedingly love to man?" "Certainly not," he at once replies, "you do not understand our views. We attach great importance to the fruits of religion. We believe our doctrines require us to labor incessantly. No persons can think more highly than we do of benevolent enterprises, societies for relieving the sick, the needy and the friendless. We would reform every where intemperance, licentiousness, and all manner of iniquity. We deem these works as among the best evidences of a genuine piety."

Thus have we found that believers seeming, at first

view, to disagree entirely in their opinions concerning the character of a true Christian, do in reality arrive at nearly the same definition of it. Neither does the one hope to be saved by what have been called "good works" alone, i. e. by a merely outward obedience ; nor does the other rely upon a dead, inoperative "faith." Each gives a consequence, and a high one too, to that which the other had conceived him to count wholly unimportant. Both believe that faith and works are always united in the sincere Christian.

II. As regards *the method and means* of becoming religious, men are not, it is believed, so far at variance as they often imagine. "What!" some one asks with surprise, "does not this sect believe religion a sudden acquisition, while that maintains it to be of gradual attainment ; and does not this raise an insurmountable barrier between them?" I answer, neither does the one deny that conversion may be suddenly experienced, nor does the other impeach the value of a gradual change of the heart. True, it is here affirmed that in ordinary cases the process of regeneration is by imperceptible degrees, although a few may be convulsed by the quick movings of conscience. And there we are told the majority is on the side of the instantaneously converted, and the small class are the gradual converts. But on the main point, the necessity of a change of heart from spiritual death to life and holiness, all are united. And such being the fact, who shall say that the mere question of numbers and proportions makes a radical difference between these two classes of believers?

We may here be told, "you will at least acknowledge that although we may seem to coincide in our view of

the reality and importance of regeneration, we certainly do not in regard to the *agent* in this change. For while one sect believe that they have power to effect their own conversion, the other feel wholly dependent on the spirit of God." Is this statement correct? Is the assertion, that man is regenerated by the Holy Spirit alone, that he can do absolutely nothing in this work for himself, in keeping with the practice of those who so often utter it? Listen to their loud and reiterated calls of "*come* and be saved." See their messengers by the wayside. How earnestly they invite us to repair to their meetings, often intimating that the present may be our last opportunity to "*seek* the Saviour." Consider the array of means, prayer, conversation, entreaty, terror, persuasive efforts by day and by night, in public and in private. And is there no *human* agency in all these things? Is action any the less action because made in the church? How does it differ in this respect from that seen in the daily walk of a virtuous man?

But it may still be urged, that "I reject altogether the doctrine of spiritual influences, while my neighbor thinks them essential to a change of heart." My friend, if you really believe such to be my opinion, you have entirely misunderstood me. Instead of denying the influence of God upon the human soul, I believe it to be perpetual. His spirit is moving us through unnumbered instruments and means. It is borne on the silvery voice of nature. It whispers in the daily monitions and mercies of Providence. It is beaming from the pages of his word, from its commands, doctrines, promises, and warnings. It descends in the still hour of prayer. It commences these blessed offices with our moral existence, and continues them to the hour of our death. So will it prove on a strict

and candid inquiry, that all Christians esteem both human and divine agency to be concerned in the salvation of mankind. Neither excludes man from this work entirely, nor does either deny the reality and the efficacy of spiritual aid in saving the soul.

III. From this point we proceed to examine the opinions entertained by various believers in relation to the *nature of man*. It is usual to affirm, that this denomination regard man as born in sin, naturally and totally depraved; while that maintain that we are perfectly pure at our birth. But we learn, on a thorough inquiry, that this statement does injustice to the present views of one sect. The most intelligent of that sect tell us that, notwithstanding what their old books and formularies of faith say to the contrary, they now believe man, when he enters this world, is neither holy nor sinful; that we do them injustice by saying they ascribe Adam's guilt to all his posterity; for they conceive man to be a free agent, burdened in reality with no sins but his own. True, they believe it to be morally certain that every individual will commit sin. And so do we. We subscribe to this very language in full sincerity. If it were argued that all men sin *of necessity*, then we should indeed divide. But while the belief is, that, with our imperfect powers, all men are prone to, and even in moral certainty will sin, we cordially assent to it. True, they tell us, moreover, that every man, till converted, will not only sin, but do nothing else but sin. And here, indeed, we differ from them in opinion. But is it not more a speculative than a practical difference? At any rate, is it one that should prevent mutual love and fellowship?

In regard to those who believe we are sinners before committing any sin, or that all mankind fell from a state

of innocence, and inherit a nature totally corrupt through Adam's transgression, their number is, we believe, comparatively small, and daily diminishing. Christians are more and more agreed, as they discuss this point the more thoroughly, that it is only the sins we actually commit for which we shall hereafter be judged, and that every individual stands in this respect in the very same light that Adam did before his transgression. We are coming hence to think essentially alike in respect to the causes of sin and to man's native condition and capacities.

IV. Look next at the doctrine of *Election*. Whom at the present day can we name as advocates of this doctrine as held by Calvin and by Edwards? It was their belief that a part of the human race were predestinated from all eternity, and with no reference to their works whether good or evil, to be saved, and a part in the same manner to be damned. But where is the Christian who affirms now, that he who makes no efforts whatever, who neglects and despises all the means of salvation, is as likely to be saved as those who attend on the ministrations of religion, and place themselves in the way of good influences? As the original adherents to this point expounded it, there are those who *cannot*, do what they will, enter the kingdom of Heaven. While, in these days, it is expressly said, that there is no such thing as a "physical inability" to come to Christ, that it is erroneous to affirm that there are any who cannot be saved. The offer of eternal life is made, we are told, to all without one exception. And those who refuse to accept it do so from their own choice, and not of necessity.

Do you answer to this, that "a certain number *will* refuse to accept the gift of God through Christ; and that this roves them reprobates? I answer, that unless you main-

tain that these persons are unable to will their own salvation, you do not certainly hold to their unconditional reprobation. And there are very few now who carry the doctrine to that extreme. To say that the whole obstacle lies in the will, and that that might have been changed had the sinner so pleased, which is now, I believe, the prevalent view on this subject, is to give up the most objectionable part of this doctrine. Until it shall appear that some still maintain that God has consigned this individual to inevitable perdition, and raised that one to a point of absolute salvation, and this without the least reference to their own wishes and endeavors, or rather that any considerable sect or numbers adhere to this ground, we must say that the views of the Christian world on the doctrine of Election are materially and practically alike.

V. We pass now to the *Divinity of our Savior.* This is supposed to be the dividing line of the Christian world. "We believe," say my orthodox brethren to me, "that Christ was divine, and you do not. This makes so complete a difference between us that we cannot hold fellowship with you." But what is here intended by the word "divine?" That Jesus was *all* divine? By no means. "He possessed," they themselves tell us, "a human nature, something totally distinct from his divinity. When he averred, "I can of myself do nothing, he spoke as a man." So far, then, the Savior was inferior to the Divine Nature, and must of course have been dependent upon it. From this conclusion there is no possible escape. For either the human nature of Christ was equal with the Father, in which case we can attach no meaning to his words, "My Father is *greater* than I," or it was strictly inferior to, and dependent upon a higher power, that is, upon the Divine Nature, — upon God who

was with him, and wrought in and through him. Now this is essentially the opinion most Christians entertain of Christ. I believe in the divinity of Christ, when thus understood and explained. He was divine in his origin, for he came from God. The spirit of God was imparted without measure unto him, and this made him divine. He was connected with the Father by the miraculous powers he had received from Him. By his daily and intimate communion with God, by his perfect devotion to His will, by the immaculate purity of his life, by his holy resignation to the pleasure of the Father in sorrow, suffering and death, he was filled with an unquestionable divinity. It was the superhuman within and with Him, which constituted Him our all-sufficient Savior. And without it he is no more to us than a mere man. His doctrine is no better than that of the prophets, — and his labors and sacrifices are worth no more to us than those of Paul or Peter. Still I regard him, so far as his humanity was concerned, i. e. "of himself" as able, taking his own language, "to do nothing." It was God in him and with him which enabled him to be the Savior of sinners. Human nature, unaided and weak, could never have accomplished what he did for our souls. Thus does it prove that in regard to what is essential respecting the divinity of Christ his followers are united. They contend about the manner and extent of his connexion with God, but they all still believe that it was "God manifest in the flesh" to whom we owe our salvation.

VI. Let us briefly, in the next place, compare the views of the several Christian sects upon the subject of *Atonement*. One we see treating another as if they really "denied the Lord that bought them;" and this charge is retorted by the allegation of a belief that the

infinite sacrifice is a substitute for, or has removed all that relates to the sins of the redeemed. But when this latter doctrine is so stated, the modern advocates of atonement tell us we misunderstand them; that they believe we must *repent* of our sins and offer ourselves up to be servants of Christ. And furthermore they say, the Atonement, however it may affect our relations to God, will not bring us salvation except it exert a moral influence in leading us to holiness and newness of life. And still farther, if we sin after embracing the Savior, we must repent of it all before we can enter the kingdom of Heaven. Now this is essentially my belief, and it is common, I think, to the Christian world. For who does not conceive of Christ as leading sinners to repentance, and thence to salvation? Who regards his religion of any value in the sight of God if it have not thus reached and reformed his inward man? Do we not all hold that our iniquities separate us from our Father above, and that "God *through Christ* is reconciling the world to himself?" The necessity of this reconciliation is certainly conceded by every believer. It is the received opinion of us all that sinners needed this restoration to God, and that through the labors, sufferings, and death of Christ the means are provided to effect it.

It is here objected that I have said nothing of "the wrath of God," of the violation of the divine justice, and the satisfaction of that justice by the blood of an innocent victim?" This is true, nor do I believe that the Christian lives in this land who holds to these dark dogmas in such a sense that he can possibly explain them to another, or that they can be fairly said to be articles of faith, i. e. so intelligible as to be really believed in, certainly not so much so as of themselves to make him a practical disci-

ple of Christ. By a man's faith in Atonement I understand such views of it as he holds with sufficient clearness and power to influence his own heart and life. Many other points in relation to it he may *imagine* himself to believe; but these only constitute, philosophically and truly speaking, his belief. Tell me then, penitent sinner, what first led you to the foot of the cross? Was it some deep purpose in the government of God, some mysterious conceptions of His wrath and justice? No. It was not until you felt the *love of Christ* burning within you that the tears of repentance began to flow. It was the burden of your sins, a sense of guilt, which that awful evil should always awaken in man, that first moved you to embrace the mercy of God as manifested in Christ. You believed, then, as all sincere Christians must and do, that through Jesus alone can we receive Atonement, reconciliation and salvation.

There are those, doubtless, who will say that in the preceding statements, I have given unwarrantable and incorrect representations of those doctrines styled "evangelical," — that had they been set forth in their true light, we should perceive a total and radical difference between them and those of the writer. How then, I ask, shall we ascertain this difference, its nature and extent? If I allege that the self-styled evangelical believe that through the sin of Adam, all his posterity are born sinners, so that the infant who dies is inevitably lost, the charge is repelled. I am told we shall stand or fall, not by the deeds of Adam, but according to our own deeds; and that they do not hold to imputed guilt. If, again, I assert that they believe in election, in such a sense that some will be saved and others damned, merely because the Almighty has so decreed, they accuse me of great

injustice. They believe in man's ability and accountableness before heaven. When, still further, I affirm that they regard Christ as divine in such a sense, that in him *God suffered and died*, as he must have done if the human and divine natures made but one person, they revolt from the statement as erroneous and shocking. If I declare their faith to be, that the Atonement will save men entirely, and without their own exertions, it is said there are conditions, just such as I should myself advance, viz. that the sinner must repent and come unto Christ, before he can be reconciled to God. And so it is with nearly all the fundamental doctrines of religion. Do I profess myself distinguished by a belief in the divine *Unity*? "No," says my Trinitarian brother, "I hold myself to three in one, as constituting the Godhead, and am as strict a Unitarian as you?" Do we claim to be the only consistent Protestant believers? Our brethren maintain that they too regard "the Bible as the only sufficient rule of faith and practice," and only express its doctrines, for convenience sake, in human language; and that they advocate decidedly, "the rights of private judgment." When we call ourselves "rational Christians," they begin at once to *reason* about their religious opinions, and contend that they hold to nothing unreasonable.

If, then, these things are so, why, it will be asked, is there such an apparent difference in the doctrinal opinions of the various sects of Christians? And why are they separated so far from each other in their writings, conversation and worship? Why have they set up altar against altar, and labored so earnestly under different guides?

The causes of this apparent inconsistency, we answer, are numerous. We say apparent, for we believe very much of it is not real. That there are some differences of opinion among Christians is, of course, too obviously a fact, to be denied. All we would maintain is, that in regard to the *essential, saving* truths of the gospel, they are mainly agreed. But to the question before us, "Why this seeming disunion among the disciples of Christ?"

One cause of it, probably the chief one, may be found in the LANGUAGE they employ in discussing their faith with each other. The terms which they use, are not mutually understood. Your fellow-Christians adopt words and phrases which you think ambiguous, or otherwise ill-chosen. You prefer and adopt others to express the very same truths. But in changing your language, he conceives that you have also changed your opinions. He makes no distinction, in general, between the abandonment of a doctrine, and of the old way of expressing it. His religion is inseparably associated with ancient words and formulas. If therefore I substitute the word favor for "grace," he thinks I cannot be a believer in salvation through grace, although my belief in it is in reality as strong as his. To become virtuous, pure, good, must signify, he is confident, something very different from "experiencing religion." And to speak of "reconciliation to God," and omit using the word "Atonement," seems to him but a refined and "philosophical" way of denying entirely the doctrine of Atonement. But let us not suppose there is this vital connection between religious opinions and the language in which we choose to express them. No. Let all Christians vary the phraseology they have hitherto used, let them communicate their

religious sentiments in language which they use in their daily conversation, and we believe that multitudes, who now worship apart, would soon bow before a common altar, and see often a brother where they had looked hitherto only for an opponent.

Among the causes of divisions and sects we should next name the LOVE OF CONTROVERSY inherent in our nature. This passion we see exhibited in the dissensions that prevail in relation to politics, science, art, literature, morals; every subject, indeed, whether speculative or practical, that occupies the mind of man. There are not a few who like to contend, and differ as much as they can from others on the various topics they discuss. This is done from every variety of motive. And there is hardly one of these motives which, joined to a love of opposition, debate and victory, does not lead Christians to profess doctrines as wide as possible from the faith of their neighbors. The most trivial points have, for this reason, often been the means of the greatest divisions. Add to this, that religion is the most interesting, and the most important subject of human thought, and we can easily perceive how it separates believers and sects one from the other.

There are other causes of division, each of which might be profitably dwelt upon, and expanded. There is pride of opinion, an unwillingness to unite with those from whom we have hitherto professed to differ. Personal dislikes; alienation from a particular clergyman or influential man in a parish; and the not being noticed so much in one society as we should be in another; an ambition for office; an unhallowed priestcraft and love of domination; family connections, leading the husband, wife, son, and daughter to profess doctrines they utterly disbelieve; temporal interest,— going to church, and, of

course, pretending to believe with those who will assist us in our worldly business; sectarian names; and a bigoted attachment to places and creeds which we fear is not confined to any denomination of Christians; these, and other like influences, have occasioned us to seem to disagree in our faith much more than we in reality do.

The conclusion to which we have come, is one of exceeding importance to the interests of Christianity. It should teach us a spirit of charity, toleration and love. How miserably is he employed, who sets himself about magnifying, as much as possible, the difference between his own views of religion and those of his brother man. And yet we cannot but suspect that this has had much to do in the work of alienation and dissension among Christians. How opposed is it to the whole spirit and tenor of the gospel! Jesus was the prince of *peace*, and his apostles exhort us to "*study* the things which make for peace." Be this then our aim and endeavor. Let us discuss with our brethren all the points of our faith; for discussion is wholesome and good. But let it be done in the hope of finding ourselves nearer to each other than we had previously supposed. Let it unite us at least in heart. If it do this, we may differ innocently on many points of mere speculation. There are signs in the times of a continual, though often unacknowledged approximation among Christians to a common ground, and to a fundamental union. God hasten a unity of spirit among them. Let us do our part in the promotion of this noble object. Let us seek, and find, and cling to that golden chain which binds all true Christians in the belief and the love of one God and Father, and one all-sufficient Saviour; and in the solemn looking forward to an impartial retribution in the day of accounts, and to the eternal re-union of "the just made perfect."

1st Series. No. 101.

A

DISCOURSE

ON THE

LAW OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

BY JAMES WALKER, D. D.

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON,

LEONARD C. BOWLES, 147 WASHINGTON STREET.

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I. R. BUTTS, PRINTER, SCHOOL ST.

THE LAW OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

ROMANS, VIII, 2.

For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and detah.

Who has not been struck with these words of the Apostles, "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus." We may understand by them that law, according to which the spiritual element in our nature is excited, developed and matured,—that law, according to which Christ, in the language of scripture, is formed in us,—the life of God in the soul of man. It is a "law;"—not a system, nor a history, but a *law*. It is a law of "the spirit of life," or the spiritual life, the life of the soul considered in contradistinction to that of the body. And this law has been fully and perfectly revealed nowhere else but in the life and doctrine of Jesus Christ. Hence it is with reason denominated, "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus." And just so far as we carry out and fulfil this law, we are delivered as a necessary consequence "from the law of sin and death," that is, from the inevitable penalties of disobedience.

The law of the spiritual life, or the life of the soul! Let us first try to fix in our minds the exact meaning of this expression, and look at the evidence we have for the existence of the law denoted by it.

In regard to the *body* every one knows, that if we expose ourselves to too much heat, or too much cold, we suffer; if we take too much or too little food, we suffer; if we breathe an infected atmosphere, or swallow a poisonous drug, we suffer. The suffering does not follow casually and for once, we say, but unvariably and according to a fixed law. The life and health of the body are dependent, we say, on the fulfilment of certain conditions, on the observance of a certain law,—the law of our physical well-being; and whenever, and just in proportion as this law is violated, suffering ensues. Now is there a law, analogous to this, of our spiritual well-being, of the inner man, the life of the soul? Little as this law is made a matter of anxious study, or even of curiosity, by the bulk of mankind, there are few, I suppose, who will presume in so many words to deny or question its existence. Who does not know that under debasing influences of any kind, be they those of ignorance, or vicious habit, or the indulgence of inordinate passions, the soul suffers? It does not suffer now and then only, when thus affected; it always suffers, and therefore we say, not accidentally, but according to a fixed law. Again, who does not know that there is a natural and proper subordination of the appetites to the sentiments, and of the lower sentiments to the higher, and of all to conscience; and that when this subordination is reversed, or in any manner disturbed, the soul suffers? It is not once or twice only that the soul suffers in such a case, and then as if by chance, but

invariably and according to an established law. We also recognise the existence of this law in the soul's growth or natural development, whether manifested in whole communities under the gradual advances of civilization, or in individuals under the gradual progress of education. All its faculties and susceptibilities are not put forth at once, and indiscriminately; but one after another, in a certain order, and according to a certain law;—first, the senses,—then, the intellect,—then, the conscience, and then that refinement and exaltation of the moral nature which manifests itself under the various forms of disinterestedness and spirituality.

All this takes place, we say, not by accident merely, or as it happens; but according to a fixed law which the Creator has established. The life and health of the *soul*, and its intended growth and perfection, as in the case of the body, are made to depend on the fulfilment of certain conditions, on the observance of a certain law,—the law of our spiritual well-being. And, therefore, it is that we say, and this is what we mean when we say, that the soul has its law, and that we are inwardly happy or miserable, according as we do or do not obey it.

"But how," some may urge, "can this subjection of the soul to a fixed law consist with its acknowledged freedom?"—I answer, that the whole mind or soul is not free, any more than the whole body; the will alone is free. And the will is not free to alter or annul the laws of which I speak; but only to observe them or not, when they are known, and when to observe them or not, is within our power. A man, for instance, is free to abstain or not to abstain from intoxicating drinks, for this depends on an act of the will; but if he chooses not to abstain, he is not

free to determine what shall be the consequences, for these will depend, not on an act of the will, but on the laws of his physical and moral constitution. So, in ordinary circumstances, a man is free to go with good or bad company, to partake in innocent or vicious pleasures, or to give himself too much or too little to worldly business, for this is a matter of the will; but if he chooses to abandon himself to vile companionship, to vicious indulgences of any kind, or to utter worldliness, it is not for him to say what shall be their effect on his body or his soul; this will depend not on his own will, but on the operation of established laws. Again, every one is at liberty to avail himself, or not, as he pleases, of the means of faith and a devout habit of mind; for this is an act of the will, and so far the soul is free; but if, from any cause, he neglects these means, he can expect to become spiritually minded with no more reason than he could expect to support animal life without food. The law of his inward being forbids it. When made acquainted with this law he is, in ordinary circumstances, free to obey it, or not, as he sees fit: but if he sees fit not to obey it, he is not free to say what shall be the consequences. The consequences, the inevitable consequences will follow according to a fixed law, and he must bear them as he best can.

"But do not the scriptures authorise us to believe that we can at any moment break or interrupt the action of this law, in what they say of repentance and pardon, or the remission of sins?" By no means, if by breaking or interrupting the action of this law is meant, that the law itself is in any respect annulled, altered, or suspended. For what is repentance, and what is pardon or the remission of sins, when "spiritually discerned?" A sinner repents

when he stops in his guilty course, gives another direction to his thoughts, desires, and aims, and puts himself in motion to retrace his steps. All these acts are included in true repentance, and they are all acts of the will; in regard to which, therefore, the sinner is free to do them or not at any moment. He is free to repent at any moment; and on repenting, what follows? He voluntarily puts himself into a different spiritual condition, and as a necessary consequence, his inward state becomes different. Now this change in one's inward state is what we are to understand by the scriptural doctrine of pardon, or the remission of sins. It is with strict propriety denominated *pardon*, because God, as the moral governor of the universe, has mercifully provided for it, as such, in the original constitution of the human soul; and we *feel* it to be pardon, because in being reconciled to the law, we feel ourselves to be reconciled to the Lawgiver. An atonement has been effected. We feel ourselves to be *at one* again with Him from whom by our sins we have been estranged. Evidently, however, all this may and does take place not in consequence of a rescinding, or even of a temporary suspension or overruling of the law of the spiritual life. It merely implies that as soon as a man by any means recovers a conformity to the law of his spiritual well-being, he no longer suffers as being at war with that law. Accordingly in the doctrines of repentance and pardon, or the remission of sins, rightly understood, we find,—not an objection, but new evidence for the existence of the law in question, and of its certain and invariable operation. The law itself, as I have said, continues forever in force,—that law according to which "as a man soweth so also shall he reap," in the inner as in the outer

world. If a man's inward life, for the time being, accords with that law which the Creator has prescribed in the very constitution of the soul, he is inwardly happy; if it does not, and in the same proportion as it does not, he is inwardly miserable.

And this will help us to resolve what probably strikes many as one of the mysteries of human life: to wit, that so many should possess all the outward means of happiness, and even wear the outward semblance of happiness, and yet not be happy. Why is this? Simply because, while they have studiously complied with the conditions on which some of the outward means of happiness depend, they have not as yet complied with those on which happiness itself depends. They have not expected health, property, friends, fame, except by resorting to the appointed means; except by conformity to establish laws, and in this they were wise. But they have forgotten that we must not only have the outward means of happiness, but be ourselves in a condition rightly to appreciate and enjoy them. They have forgotten, that the life and health of the soul have also their law, and that this law must be fulfilled, or no mere worldly prosperity can do any thing more than mock us with an unreal show of good. An undying worm may still be gnawing at the heart's core: an unquenchable flame may still be burning and consuming there. And here, too, let me observe that great learning, or intellectual distinction of any kind, only makes a corresponding development of our moral and religious nature so much the more indispensable, to bring about the requisite balance and harmony of soul. How long will men, and sensible and strong-minded men too, persist in the fatal error of looking without, for that

contentment and joy which they can find only by looking within; and can find there only by bringing the inward life into conformity with the law of its own well-being. There is no other way. It will not do for us to turn away from this subject, as being mystical; it is not mystical, but, to a mind accustomed to self-scrutiny, entirely simple and practical. It will not do for us to say, that we have no taste for such things; that we are practical men; that we are not used to these refined speculations on the inward springs of happiness: that we will not attend to them. We must do it; or virtually renounce all pretensions to acting wisely and rationally, and throw up to chance our prospects of happiness,—here, or hereafter. Besides, why should it be accounted a less practical thing to study into and obey the laws of our inward than of our outward well-being? Is it the distinction of what are called practical men, that they care about every thing but *themselves?*

Would to God I could press home this consideration with such earnestness and power, that all who now hear me might feel its weight and solemnity. It is, as I believe, the great doctrine; the sum and substance of all spiritual wisdom; the "life and immortality" brought to light in the gospel. We look at the wretched victim of intemperance as he staggers along the streets, we go into our prisons, and behold the miserable outcasts who have brought themselves under the heaviest penalties of the laws of their country; and we wonder that they could so far forget what was necessary to their own well-being, as to be guilty of such folly; going directly against laws which they know to exist, the penalties of which they know. But why stop here with our wonder, for the folly does not stop here. There are other laws beside those of

the body, which the drunkard violates, and those of the state, which the felon violates; there are the laws of the soul, of our own inward peace and life. Whoever violates these by neglecting his own moral and spiritual culture, or through a wrong state of the affections, or a want of faith, whatever may be the external decency of his manners, or his condition in society, stands convicted of the same folly. He also flies in the face of laws which he knows to exist, and the penalties of which he knows. Nay, he is guilty of a worse folly, for he strikes immediately at his own happiness, not merely as connected with his body and the outward world which are passing away, but as connected with that mysterious and immortal element of his nature, which will continue to be, and to be as he shall make it, when the heavens are no more.

If I am right in the doctrine of this discourse, then have I indicated in what way the servant of Jesus Christ should qualify himself for the ministry of reconciliation. His office in regard to the soul resembles that of the physician in regard to the body; namely, to promote its proper expansion and growth, and to keep off or to cure disease. But would a physician feel himself qualified to enter on the duties of his profession without first making himself acquainted with the laws of the body on the observance of which life and health depend, that he may know when and how far these laws have been violated in a particular case, and in what manner his patient may be brought into harmony with them again. It will hardly do for a minister at the present day, to say, "I will preach as many sermons and make as many pastoral visits as my brethren do, and then, if I fail, the fault will not be mine." No two congregations, hardly any two individuals are alike, one being inclined to skepticism,

another to indifference, and a third to fanaticism; and a minister, therefore, in order to be successful must be able to accommodate his preaching and conversation to the peculiar wants of his people, individually and collectively; and this he can only do by means of a wise moral and spiritual discrimination. Mere *metaphysics*, as that term is commonly understood, or an exact analysis of the mental faculties, will not be of much assistance to him in this respect; because what he wants to know is not how the mind is constituted, but how it acts, on being variously affected and modified, as it is, by peculiarities of temperament and circumstances. It is not the mere frame-work of the soul, if I may so express it, which he needs to understand, but the law of the soul's *life;* not the law of its constitution, but the law of its life. And this he must study in the living subject;—in himself; in the lives of men remarkable for their piety; and in the history of great revolutions of moral and religious sentiment like that which took place at the Protestant Reformation, or in the rise and growth of Methodism. Nay, he may study it in the accounts that have appeared of the wildest and most debasing fanaticisms, which are to our profession what collected specimens of morbid anatomy are to the physician; for they make us acquainted with the forms which the religious sentiment, when diseased or perverted, will put on; and they also warn us of the consequences of presuming, though with the best intentions, to tamper ignorantly with the tremendous energies of man's spiritual nature. Above all, he will study this law in the very genius of Christianity, which plants all hope on a regeneration of our inward being; in the revelation which the gospel has made of the hidden springs of the spiritual life; and in the solitary and

sublime manifestation which it has given us of a "perfect man in Christ Jesus."

Again, if I am right in the doctrine of this discourse, I have indicated what should be the principal object of preaching. It should be a plain and practical unfolding of the law of the spiritual life, connected with an earnest inculcation of the duties that law imposes on all men, if they would be true to either of the two great instincts of their nature, a desire of happiness, or a desire of perfection. It is not enough that we assert in general terms the reality of the spiritual life, and declaim about its superiority and divinity, and assure our hearers that in some way or other their happiness is wrapped up in it. We must endeavor, as God shall give us light and power, to solve the problem, to clear up the great mystery; we must unfold the law of man's inward being, point out its connexion with his whole being, and show that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," but in the state of his consciousness; or, in other words, that he *is*, not according to what he is outwardly, but according to what he is inwardly. This, as it seems to me, is the preacher's peculiar and indispensable work. Other influences are in operation,—our physical wants, the business of the world, the dictates of mere selfishness, the needs and collisions of society,—to which every one is more or less subject, and which must have the effect more or less to bring out and educate the lower faculties of the mind and heart. But we can hardly expect them to reach and awaken the finest and deepest instincts of the soul, or call attention sufficiently to the capacities and duties which belong to our spiritual being, or grow out of our relations to the spiritual world. Accordingly we find that thousands live and die without

ever being once thoroughly awakened to a distinct and vivid consciousness that they have souls ; and often when the conviction breaks in on the mind, and it may be a cultivated and refined mind too, it breaks in as a new and sudden revelation. What, therefore, other influences are not doing, and cannot be expected to do, preaching should aim to effect, thus meeting and supplying a peculiar want in the education of the individual and of society. And be under no apprehensions that it will lead to any form of mysticism, or quietism, or fanaticism, so long as care is taken not only to inculcate the reality of the spiritual life, but its law.

Do not suppose, however, that the doctrine of this discourse would forbid or condemn any one of all the different kinds of preaching in its season and place ; only let it never be forgotten that the ultimate object should always be to awaken men to a consciousness of their spiritual being, to acquaint them with its eternal law, and to create in them a desire and determination to bring their minds and hearts into harmony therewith. Let there be speculative, doctrinal, controversial preaching ; —not however to turn on barren questions in metaphysics or polemical theology, in which the people happily take but little interest, and which settled one way or the other, cannot make one hair white or black. Let such preaching turn rather on those great principles which are yet to be settled, or on prevailing mistakes which are yet to be corrected, respecting our idea of a perfect man, the place which the spiritual life should hold in the estimate of the character, and the dependence of the whole on the quickening power of faith, and the truth as it is in Jesus. Let there also be ethical, practical, experimental preaching ; not however to run out into vague generalities on moral

abstractions, — a mere speaking into the air. The practical preacher should deal with the living man ; go down among the sympathies, the wants, the aspirations of the living soul, and show how these are affected by the influences to which the soul is subjected in the world, and how they may be refined and elevated by a wise and Christian culture, and by the strenuous and faithful exercises of the will when freed and sanctified by the power of truth. Finally, let there be expository preaching. Preach the gospel ; preach Jesus Christ ; but not for the purpose of settling chronological difficulties, or reconciling apparent discrepancies. Let the hearer be led rather to enter into the mind of Christ ; to comprehend the deep spiritual meaning of his teachings, and to recognise and acknowledge the light from heaven which they flash into the dark chambers of the soul. The complaint has come up from some quarters that the preaching of Rational Christians is not sufficiently effective and satisfying ; and to this multitudes are ready to reply : " They preach over the heads of the people ; they do not preach enough to the feelings." This, however, as it seems to me, is taking a very superficial view of the difficulty, which consists, I believe, so far as there is any ground for the complaint, in not paying a proper regard to the doctrine it has here been my humble endeavor to expound. We must guard against a tendency to dwell too much on the outside of life, or on merely speculative or negative views. We must help the hearer to resolve the mystery of his own inward being, and comprehend its law. We must make it to be our leading object to impress the guilty soul with a sense of its guilt, and the anxious soul with a clear view of the way of reconciliation, and every soul with a living consciousness of its unbounded and indestructible capacities of knowledge, improvement and happiness.

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ON

SPIRITUALITY OF CHARACTER.

BY E. Q. SEWALL.

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ON

SPIRITUALITY OF CHARACTER.

One description of a Christian in the New Testament is "He who is Spiritual." The title touches a chief excellence and peculiarity of the character. It expresses in one word a combination of qualities, which we have no other term so well fitted to denote. It contains the subject of the following pages. Before we proceed further, let it be distinctly understood that the words "spiritual" and "spirituality" are employed in this connexion precisely as we use other words which indicate moral characteristics. They are not strange, mysterious, shadowy, any more than the terms intellectual, upright, benevolent. They belong to the same vocabulary, and are to be interpreted after the same analogy. Their claim to be classed with the signs of substantial properties of human nature in its cultivated state, is as good as the names by which we signify the most ordinary acts and expressions of intelligence and probity. It was requisite to have made these remarks at the outset, for the reason, that they bring to view one of the causes which, in many minds, obstruct all attempts to promote a more spiritual tone of sentiment and habit. They have as-

sociated with the very word "spiritual," something repulsive. The idea of what is mysterious, abstract, and remote from the apprehensions of common sense and the concerns of ordinary humanity, is intermingled with a spice of cant and hypocrisy, to make out their meaning for the term. And hence it has usually happened, that truths of most solemn interest, presented in the language proper to spiritual themes, have been scornfully rejected, or have fallen like spent arrows at their feet. We are solicitous to obtain the attention of such minds, and that the spell of prejudice may not hinder this, we urgently press the assurance that the subject before us is no more liable to the reproach which they attach to it, than is moral excellence under all its forms, and by whatever name denoted. Spirituality of character is no more visionary, enthusiastic, fanatical, than is generosity, genius, or patriotism. If it have its refinements and sublimities, so have they; so has taste, so has eloquence, so has almost every thing which flows from man's higher nature, or relates to its development and perfection.

The term "spiritual" in the use we make of it in this connexion is opposed to "sensual," "earthly," "worldly," names which mark the prevalent state of a soul abandoned to itself and to circumstances, in this terrestrial scene, without the influences of religious faith. As we meet, too, with the word "spirit" in a sense antithetical to "letter" and "form," so is there a correspondent use of "spiritual," by which it expresses what is inward, soul-felt, seated in the heart, in contradistinction to what is outward in the flesh, formal, without life, earnestness and power. Both classes of signification will be

found to mingle in the term "spirituality," as applied to character. It is descriptive of a general temper and pervading habit of the mind, rather than confined to denote particular acts of piety and virtue. It is affixed, not to one or two special exercises of the spiritual principle, but to the whole experience of the christian life. It stands for qualities, which are diffused over every part of conduct, and modify all the feelings, and not for such as have but a transitory existence and a limited operation.

Let it be supposed, for a moment, that all which Christianity contains, all which it has brought into the world, were expunged and taken away. That the record of Jesus Christ's life and ministry existed not. That there were among us no oracle, no revelation, no promise, no hope of immortality. That the whole of those treasures of knowledge out of which our souls are now so enriched, and those treasures of grace in which our hearts now so exult, were rifled from us, and no relic or vestige of the spiritual blessings imparted by the Son of God were left to mankind. In the drear waste which would remain can we imagine how desolate we should be? Can we picture to ourselves the change that must pass upon all that concerns our duty, peace, and joy, — the life we are living and the death we shall die? It is probable, that not an individual whose eye rests upon this page, but would start with a thrill of horror at the bare suggestion, that he was not capable of justly appreciating the woe of such a loss, or not likely to share in the intensest and most disconsolate grief it might occasion. And yet how many there are among those who profess and call themselves Christians, whose sense of the worth

of our religious blessings, if it must be inferred solely from the tokens of interest exhibited in their conversation in the world, cannot in truth be rated above the very lowest measure, and could furnish out but a poor account of the value and influence of our holy faith! The difference between living as if there were no such gift of God to man as the Gospel, and the state of feeling and mode of conduct which might be induced by the extinction of that inestimable boon, is not considerable.

Is it because familiarity and undisputed possession has the effect of dulling the sensibility to the value of every blessing, that men hold in indifference and coldness of heart, what they would yet not consent to have withdrawn? Or is it that we sinfully neglect and ungratefully disesteem, in the security of long established proprietorship, that which the thought of losing forever might awaken us to incalculable distress? Be this as it may, none can doubt whether or not Christianity is exerting its rightful sway in a mind which has no pervading sense of its transcendent importance, and is giving no habitual proofs of such an interest. And it is in order to bring out distinctly a chief element in spirituality of character, that we have made the above supposition. To the spiritual man belongs no form of godliness without the power. A feeling of the infinite worth of Christianity is settled at the bottom of his heart, and makes itself known throughout his whole plan of life. Religion is with him, not one among innumerable good things which take their turns in his regard, as circumstances and accident may determine, but the pre-eminent, all-surpassing interest and blessing, a good second to none other at any time, which knows no rival in his esteem, no competitor

for his affections. This just appreciation of religion must produce in the character effects corresponding. It will have a radical and universal influence. It will give a tone to the emotions, a bias to the thought, a tendency to the whole spiritual nature which is distinguishable as the result of no other cause apart from this. Acts which religion prescribes, and which are in themselves well fitted to be the vehicle of religious sentiment, and to foster it in the breast, are soul-less and impotent, where no sense of the unparalleled importance of religion exists. What right care of the soul can be expected, if the soul's worth be not felt? And who will aim to worship God in the spirit, but he that prizes the favor of the true beholder of the heart too highly, to dare to venture it upon unmeaning lip-service, or vain ceremonial? Or how, with reason, may we look for a Christian preparation for death, judgment, and eternity, from them in whose minds these dread realities are uniformly excluded from attention, or counterpoised by trifles of a day?

It is common to speak of those as intellectual, by way of eminence, whose devotion to scientific and literary pursuits has given prominence to their intellectual powers, while it proceeded from, and was sustained by their deep sense of the value of such pursuits? If the objects sought in the culture and exercise of that part of our nature were underrated, we should anticipate with confidence no excellence of intellect, and no devotedness in study. Analogous to this use of "intellectual," is the use of "spiritual" which we here make. The spirituality of a character bespeaks the paramount importance in the mind's esteem of the claims of the spiritual nature, and of religion as adapted to meet those claims. Where-

ever it exists, this spirituality is evidenced by a decided predilection for the objects and interests of the heavenly world; by devotion to the duties of piety; by self consecration and continual aspirations after the purity of celestial beings. Things unseen, unearthly, divine, have assumed the ascendancy within. Life's great purpose is found in religion. This religious end is chosen unreservedly, and forms the centre around which all other interests revolve, as secondaries around their primary planet. It takes the lead in the plans and calculations of every period, — and under all circumstances and through all changes, retains its control.

The conviction has been deep-rooted in all ages, that a christian-like mind implied the superior influence of a regard to the unseen, spiritual, and eternal, and was to be maintained in its vigor and purity but by conflict with things seen, terrestrial, and temporal. So unearthly was felt to be the spirit of Jesus, that to some it has seemed impossible for his friends to partake of it, except by a sort of mental exile, by flying from the attractions of material things, renouncing sublunary interests, and abandoning earth in pursuit of heaven. To these, a life of contemplative devotion in retreats secluded from the common haunts of men was the only spiritual life, and to linger among social scenes, to live in the world, was to have denied the faith. The error in their conclusion, we may avoid, without impairing the truth which brought them to it by a wrong deduction. The spirit of Jesus is of that unearthly character which it has been deemed to be. And the Christian can have the mind that was in Christ, but in so far as in him also the unseen, the spiritual, the eternal, habitually counterbalances the power of

things seen, terrestrial, and temporal. Nor will any doubt, that the attempt to produce and render permanent such an effect must occasion a conflict between the higher and the lower principles in human nature itself, and between the soul within, and the material scene, and the attractions of sublunary good abroad. But from every false use of truths like these, there is enough to preserve us in the distinction which the great teacher's own words have so clearly established, — "*not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil.*"

There are many ways in which even they who confess Christ and bear his name have eluded the right inference from the conviction of his intensely spiritual character, his elevation above earthly pursuits and pleasures, and that heavenly mindedness which breathes in every word and breaks forth in every act of Jesus. And one which is as plausible as any is, that which is found in a consideration of the necessary wants and imperious claims of the human condition in the present state of being. Some will say, behold how much is demanded of me in order to my very subsistence ; what continual acquisitions must be made to meet perpetual expense for my household ; in what a series of urgent cases am I not forced to involve myself, that my place and estimation in the commercial, the political, or the literary world, be not forfeited. And amidst all these claims upon my time and attention, with what right can it be required of me to do more than sustain myself in such a kind and degree of faith as implies the absence of all flagrant violations of moral laws, and keeps me at peace with all about me? How am I, being thus hemmed in on every side by affairs of this

world, to cherish habitual aspirations towards the world to come? Now, while so much is pressing upon me continually, of concern for the present life, can I be expected to have uniform reference in my thoughts, words, and actions, my pursuits, pleasures, and duties, my desires, hopes and fears, to the life which is still future? Questions like these betray a confusion of ideas upon the subject of that spirituality of character which Christianity makes it incumbent on us to cultivate, and also a narrow and partly a false view of the real interests and claims of our condition in this terrestrial scene. And the best, and a very sufficient answer to them may be found in a consideration of what is meant by the declaration respecting Christ himself, that he was "*not of the world*," since, at the utmost, no disciple is called to a state of heart and life that shall shew him to be *not of the world*, in any other sense, than his lord was not of the world. Let us inquire if in the history of Christ's outward life while he tabernacled in the flesh, or in what the record discloses of his inward dispositions and temper, or in any precept or doctrine of his, there be any thing which, fairly interpreted, would enforce the obligation of his disciples to abandon necessary cares for the bodily sustenance and comfort, or sacrifice what is essential to the permanent welfare of a human being in his earthly relations?

We are met at the threshold by the fact, that the common people, on whom the burdens of this world must press most heavily; and to whom, above all others, the wants of this world must have seemed entitled to exclusive attention, heard Jesus gladly. Could this have been, if they had found him the austere promulgator of

doctrines at war with the just claims of the present state? Had he begun by manifesting an indifference for what they felt to be so imperative, would his authority have so easily subdued them? Another no less important circumstance is, that our Lord passed his days as he did; not as a recluse, in solitary places, where he might be least molested by the rumor of the world's pursuits and passions; not like those sages who proudly or sensitively shrunk from contact with ordinary society, and buried themselves in abstract contemplation; — but in the scenes of common concourse, surrounded by such as sustained the domestic relations, — in their houses, — at their tables. Was there ought in the divinely spiritual character of Christ which repelled the cheerfulness, or was too stern for the innocent gaiety of others, when we know he was sought as a guest at their feasts? It would be impossible to find instances of a ready and hearty sympathy for all that most moves the human heart in the trials of life, than we meet with in the history of Jesus. Into our conceptions of that spirituality which distinguished him, must enter a holy delicacy, a lofty elevation of sentiment, surpassing the utmost degree of refinement known in cultivated society. It would seem as if the daily approximation of multitudes, among whom were the most sordid, low, and coarse of a degraded populace, might have produced in him a sense of loathing, and made him revolt from such contact as irksome and humiliating in the extreme. And yet do we behold him with a gentleness that bore no mark of the feeling of condescension, and a patience unattended by any signs of lurking disgust or weariness, permit the importunate poor to spread at his feet the beds on which lay their

sick, maimed, infirm, insane friends. We see them not afraid to cling by the skirts of his garment, or sit down beside him. How did he listen to all they had to say; do for them what he saw they most needed; open his heart for them to pour in all their griefs! When was he ever known to refuse attention to any because of their obtuseness of intellect, their coarseness of feeling, their earthliness of soul, — much less for any thing that was unseemly or loathsome in their outward array? Again, if we represent to ourselves what must have been the conscience of Jesus, his moral taste, his sensibility to the good and evil of the spiritual nature, we may suppose the inward recoil of him "who knew no sin" from the deep depravity of which he was every day the witness. With what unspeakable abhorrence may we not imagine him to have been moved towards the contaminating spectacle! He who was the image of Divine Purity, in whom we have manifested to us the brightness of the Father's moral glory, — how must he have been constrained to abandon or drive away from him the gathering concourse of beings whose sins were often the accumulation of long lives, spent in ignorance of or alienation from God and all good influences! But we find no such violent out-breakings of even the holiest indignation. If Jesus rebuked vice clad in hypocrisy, and usurping power under the authority of religion, with the stern dignity of a prophet, the offended majesty of the son of God, — he was full of forbearance towards others. By the mingled influence of unsullied purity and a divine compassion, he drew around him souls ready to perish by their sins, whose unequivocal guilt had made them outcasts from the general favor and pity of their

race. As he let in upon their dark minds the light of truth, and probed to the quick their ulcerous hearts, they hung about him as dying men about a miraculous healer. He caused their tears to flow like a strange current from the rock, melted their obduracy to contrition, assuaged the intolerable anguish of their remorse, and in the hope of being yet once again born of God to virtue, he gave them too the hope of recovery to long lost peace.

Thus true to every human sympathy was he who "was not of the world," and whose unearthly purity exalted him so far above it. Here was most assuredly no such spirituality as militates with the interests of man in his present low estate. Nothing of misanthropic pride, or a repulsive sanctity. What heightens the force of these considerations very greatly is, that Jesus found in none others the capacity to sympathize with him in all that was nearest his heart. The world knew him not. It understood not his designs. It shared in no part of his solicitude. It was closed against him in all those instances, when to human apprehension he most needed the solace of sympathy. There is usually nothing which inclines men more to solitude than the enforced seclusion of what most peculiarly engages their thoughts and affections, while among those who cannot, or will not, enter into their views and participate their feelings. And how must the mind of Christ have been conscious of this sort of separation from all about him, of this loneliness in the midst of crowds. But did this occasion him to court retirement? Did his being so cut off from adequate sympathy make him quit the scenes of common interest, and withdraw to some spot where he might be

at once free from the world's encroachments, and revolve in self-communion the themes which absorbed his heart? Far from it. He did indeed take time to commune apart with his own soul and with God. But it was time that was no longer demanded by his care for others. Hours, when the weary were at rest, Jesus refused to his own weariness, and saved them up for converse with the skies. The night which wrapt in soothing slumbers the multitudes who had followed him all day; — the night which brought to the sufferers with whom he wept oblivion of their woe; — the night, when he could not toil for others; — Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, devoted often to solitary contemplation and consoling prayer. But the rising and the setting sun found him at his works of mercy, or communicating the word of salvation to the listening throng. What was there in such spirituality as his, that frowned upon life's ordinary interests? How far was he from the habits of one, who was not of the world in the sense of estrangement from what belongs to its welfare!

Christianity is like its author. It inculcates all the domestic and social virtues with as much earnestness as the care of the spiritual nature and devotion towards God. That apostle whose spirituality was as eminent as any other quality of his mind, enjoins that we please not ourselves, but every one his neighbor for his good, adding as a motive, — "For even Christ pleased not himself." He commands that we be not slothful in business; and when, in allusion to his own case to be burdensome to no man, he says, "Ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my necessities and to them that were with me;" he continues, "I have showed you how that so

laboring ye ought to support the weak," remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, ' It is more blessed to give than to receive.' " More especially remarkable would, on this supposition, have been the inculcation of diligent exertion in common labors, by the very motives which are so efficacious upon the mass of mankind, as in these passages. " That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without; — that ye may have lack of nothing; — that ye may have to give to him that needeth." Nor could it have been less noticeable that, as if by anticipation of a common apology for excessive devotion to the pursuit of gain, the same apostle should have written, " If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith."

Language such as this cannot have been learned in the school of a mere ascetic, whose doctrine enforced a constrained neglect of earthly pursuits, and who sought to promote among men a piety which should make them indifferent to the proper avocations of life. And it merits our admiration, that Christianity, which confessedly is above all religions, unearthly and spiritual in its tone of sentiment, in the character of its instructions, and in the purposes it holds of most importance, — does, while calling us to a close walk with God, to high and solemn communion with him by solitary prayer and meditation; — while commanding us to *set our affections on things above; — to lay up treasures in Heaven, and to look not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are unseen and eternal,* — does yet descend to even the smaller particulars which belong to a prudent care for present comfort and well-being; — teaching, not only to be industrious, but to be frugal; not only to be

faithful, but discreet; not only to be veracious, but to be no tattlers or busy-bodies; not only to do good on occasions when the suffering poor claim sympathy, but to be given to hospitality. It were easy to multiply such quotations from the New Testament, as are familiar to every reader, and show upon their very face, how unfounded must be any views of our religion, which represent it as seeking to further men's spiritual interests, without heed to the needs and cares of the present life.

"Some may suppose," says Owen in his Treatise on Spiritual Mindedness, "some may suppose, that to have men spiritually minded, we would make them mopes; but let not any be mistaken; I am not to take men out of their lawful earthly occasions, but to bring spiritual thoughts and affections into the management of them all; a man may do as much work whilst he is spiritual, as whilst he is carnal; spiritual thoughts will no more hinder you in your callings, than those which are vain and earthly, which all sorts of men find leisure for, in the midst of their employments." It is worth while for one who pleads the care of his temporal affairs in apology for slighting the spiritual nature, to ask himself what it is, which really occasions an injurious neglect of common avocations, and robs life of its interest and charm? Not to mention the more palpable vices, which seldom fail to lead on to ruin and a broken heart, — whence most often arises that morbid sensibility, — and that self-torturing melancholy, — and that weary disgust with the world, — and that cynical temper, which scorns both man and his pursuits? Let physical causes be set aside, and then ask, to what such scourges as these, confessedly destructive as they are of their unhappy subject's temporal interests, are to be ordinarily traced? Is it because the

soul was too deeply sensible of its own wants, — or felt too much the value of a divine friendship amidst the perplexities of life, or because it was too intent on its heavenly home, or had indulged too far the joys of the spirit, or too earnestly meditated a Saviour's love, — that its energies sunk, its affections withered, its hopes became extinct, its whole nature changed to bitterness? Is it that this world has been undervalued and immortality overrated, earthly good too little esteemed, and celestial bliss inordinately prized, that men grow despondent in misfortune; — are moody when success is followed by satiety; — complain that there is nothing worth living for, when disappointed of some fond aim; — turn disconsolate from the grave of others and look with horror to their own? Was it that religious faith was too rife in him, that the still lamented and long admired Byron, became even

> "In his youth's summer . . . . . .
> The wandering outlaw of his own dark mind."

We know full well how such questions as these must be answered. It is when men forget the claims of their spiritual nature, make the world their idol, garner up in it all their treasures of hope and affection, that they lay bare their hearts to destroying angels, and gather upon their heads the black clouds of despair. It is by "minding earthly things" with an exclusive and absorbing passion, that they become not only "enemies to the cross of Christ," but enemies to their own present happiness. Avarice, and pride, and ambition, and exorbitant thirst for pleasure are the ruthless murderers, to whose cruel power sacrifices more terrible than those of blood, are offered in numbers that no man can count.

Whenever a soul passes from a state of spiritual deadness and the thraldom of habitual impiety, from a world-

ly or an unbelieving manner of living, into the condition of one alive unto God, awake to righteousness, intent on Heaven, a state devotedly and thoroughly Christian, — this newness of spirit and of life within causes all things outward to appear alike new ; — imparts of its own purity and freshness to the worn and defaced objects which had lost their power to charm ; — spreads bright hues over nature ; gives new interest to every social tie ; makes the commonest comforts delightful, and the most familiar pursuits engaging.

You who have left behind the days of your youth, — to whom the delights of that season, when all abroad wore the aspect of novelty because the soul was new, are now but matter of dim recollection, — you know what a need there is in our nature, of something to take the place of those youthful instinctive emotions, in order to keep up the tone of the spirits, and save from that heaviness and dreariness, the sinking of the heart and loss of interest, which come too surely with advancing years. There are some, possibly, among my readers, who have experienced too, what it is to be left spiritless amidst iron labor, to feel bound to persist in a round of unmitigated efforts, when there was no response in the bosom to the call for exertion, no elastic springing of the powers to grasp their objects, none of that eager and panting emotion with which a young unbroken heart welcomes every toil, and loves the very hardships of adventurous life. You will understand then what I mean, when I claim for our holy faith the power of so renovating all things within and without as to preserve and restore much of that feeling of interest, so exuberant in earlier days, which is wont to flag and almost to become extinct, without the aid of some such support as religion

alone can supply. It is by the sense of our relation to the Infinite and Eternal, by the inwrought conviction of the imperishable nature of the soul, by a uniform reference of all things to God and to a heavenly world, that we repair the wasting energy of resolution, and lift up again the drooping powers. Exclude from view the endless life, and what is there in this which can have efficacy to meet the case of a spirit wounded in its manifold conflicts and sinking beneath its heavy burdens? What is there in the precarious prospect of living on in a world, whose expedients have become to us as broken tools, and whose resources we have already drained, a few years more, and then sinking into a hopeless annihilating grave; — what is there in *this*, to wing for a higher flight the wearied soul? to put new strength into failing faculties and give new warmth to freezing affections? We know that an irreversible decree appoints to us all, as years multiply into old age, the experience of a saddening change in the aspects of things about us, and a melancholy decay of the outward man. As well might we try to detain spring's freshness for the parched summer, or the golden glories of morn for the shadowy evening, as nourish the hope of an equal glow of interest and the same capacity to enjoy in our own bosoms, or the full measure of power to please in outward objects. We cannot save up the strength of manhood for the benefit of old age, as we can by economy retain something from its earnings for the uses of that infirm period. And when the bloom, and grace, and sweetness are clean gone from every thing earthly, when we are despoiled of whatever renders the outward man most respectable to a worldly eye; — when fears shall be in the way and nature faints; — when all the interest that has been given

to life by what was of the world shall be exhausted, — what then can we bring out of the stores of this life that shall be adequate for our necessities? Happy, indeed, in that stage of our pilgrimage will be he that can still say, "*The outward man perisheth, but the inward man is renewed day by day.*" No wonder if they shudder to anticipate that cold, sad destiny, who think only and care only for the miserable vanities which are destroyed in the using.

During that awful conflagration in the commercial metropolis of our country, which has made the last year memorable for ages, while riches were vanishing on wings of fire, an opportunity was given to behold, in strong contrast, the effects of that spirituality which gives the ascendancy to religious faith and its objects, and that spirit of the world which disputes this ascendancy. In so wide-spread devastation there was no election of victims. Evil and good men shared alike. But the Christian, when he saw enveloped in a sheet of flame the fortune which a life's labors had amassed, how different were his emotions from those of the man who had centered in gain his exclusive devotion! The former could exclaim, — Go, then! fleeting treasures of earth! Your office is accomplished! My charge of you is done! But not with you can escape the good I have employed you to effect, or the benefits remaining from the discipline of your acquisition! Go, then! fleeting treasures! Ye but follow the mandate of the only Proprietor, who gave you for my use, and for my trial! And, praised be his name! poor as ye leave me in terrestrial things, there is a wealth of the soul over which no element has power, and which no accident can rifle! Go then! fleeting treasures! Ye are not my all! Yet

have I a portion insured to me against all losses, by a promise that faileth not, and *that* will enrich me, when the world and the things of it shall, like you, have passed away! But who can find a language for him, who in that same spectacle beheld the temple of his idol consuming with the god of his idolatry within it! For him, whose whole intensity of passion had been expended upon that gorgeous structure and the worship he had offered there! For him, who while he was gazing, felt that there, not his earthly all alone, but the very substance of his being's only wish and want, was made the sport of every flickering gust. No. Sounds have no power to utter what was murmured, without speech, in that stricken heart!

We can appeal to the veriest worldling and ask, if there be not an unspeakable odds in his favor who, whilst he had abundance, thought of the responsibility imposed in it by Almighty goodness, no less than of the addition it brought to his means of enjoyment, over the man who coveted affluence for luxury's sake, and when it was obtained, was alike selfish and reckless of his dependence in its use, in the hour when both return together to the task of laying anew the foundation of their fortunes? The alacrity inspired by blameless recollections, and that hope in God which survives all the Christian's losses, are surely far, very far superior to the sort of courage which desperate effort may conjure up in the mind of him, whose chief reflection is, how much he has been scourged by misfortune, and his principal reliance upon what he may yet do for himself, in remedy of the dire mischance.

We began our account of the spirituality of the Christian character with stating, that a chief element in it is the paramount importance in the mind's esteem of the

claims of the spiritual nature, and of religion as adapted to meet those claims. We referred to our Lord's own example as the standard by which our moral judgments in this, as in all other particulars, are to be most safely guided, and especially because it afforded an opportunity of considering with advantage, the objection which openly, or in some covert form, is continually re-appearing to weaken the force of all attempts to produce a more spiritual tone of sentiment and habit, — that which pleads the interference of such appeals with the fair and indispensable requirements of the common business of life. We have aimed to remove this by showing how far the spirituality of Jesus was from any approach or resemblance to that sort of devotion which this objection confounds with it, how little of an ascetic was he who was so emphatically "*not of the world*," in the sense of elevation above its contaminations and superiority to its earthliness of spirit. The peculiar care taken by Christianity of every social and domestic relation ; its inculcation of industry, frugality, and the virtues which all thrift implies ; and its tendency to protect us from the opposite vices, were adduced to prove that our religion, no more than its author, was a foe to the proper attention bestowed upon terrestrial interests. And, with a like purpose, we have adverted to the fact that so much of what most alienates the mind from just views of the claims of the present life, next to the grosser vices, is directly attributable, not to the excessive power of religious faith, but to its absence or too feeble operation. To which consideration we have added, as strongly contrasted with this, the peculiar efficacy of spirituality of mind to counterbalance the disheartening influences of change, decay, and the violent overthrow of temporal prosperity, whatever at any period

of life is calculated to induce a disastrous depression in the feeling of interest in its concerns, or to make its usual burdens insupportable. It would be foreign to our plan to enlarge further upon these topics, susceptible as they are of being presented in many varying lights, and all of these coinciding with the view we have opened, in their bearing upon the subject before us.

We proceed to notice a second requisite to the spirituality of the Christian character. It is seen in what may be termed the *re-active* operation of spiritual thoughts and affections, of that deep-seated religious sentiment, which has given to the "things of the spirit" the ascendancy in the mind, of which we have spoken. The two are thus connected in the following exhortation of St. Paul to the Romans. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies, (yourselves) a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service: and *be not conformed to this world.* And it is one office of the faith which purifieth the heart and makes it, as it were, a dwelling for Christ, the residence and home of "the mind that was in him," — and a temple of the living God, — to "overcome the world." The strong re-action of this faith against the currents which were setting powerfully in an opposite direction, in the opinions, feelings and habits of individuals on a community thoroughly unspiritual, is implied in the pointed language of the apostle in such passages as these: "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? Wherefore, be ye separate, saith the Lord."

With the progress of society, the relative position of the spiritually minded Christian will vary. And indivi-

duals will find themselves differently situated with regard to the facilities or obstacles presented by the world about them, to the maintenance within themselves of a high spirituality, and the promotion of a like form of character wherever their influence extends. But having assumed, what the whole tenor of Christianity obliges us to hold true, that to train the soul for an immortal state is the grand purpose of our present life, and that whatsoever tends to subvert this end, and cause the mind to give another and infinitely inferior one the prior place in its esteem, is so far subversive of the first principles of our faith, it is plain, that nothing but a universal agreement among men in this great design, could exempt those who do give it the ascendancy in their own hearts, and have made it as their leading star on life's pilgrimage, from the necessity of uniformly resisting influences from abroad, which threaten to make themselves unspiritual, or which run counter to their established views of the paramount object of existence. When we speak of resistance in this connexion, we are as far as possible from intending to convey the idea of any thing like the harsh, morose, bitter feeling, or the angry, stubborn, sullen conduct, which has too often been mistaken for righteous opposition in such as would be thought spiritually minded, to a vain, ungodly world. Having denied that it is any part of a Christian's calling to act the ascetic, to abandon the common social haunts, or withdraw as much as necessity will allow from all participation in lawful pursuits and innocent pleasures, we are not about to send him into society only to embitter it by his querulous temper, or darken it by his perpetual frown. We do not so forget how he who, with a weight of unutterable sorrow upon his soul on account of it, was compelled to say, "Me the

world hateth," — was wont to mingle with a benignant sweetness, which looked kindly down on all about him, in the throng at public festivals, or how he heightened the joy of the households which were honored by his presence. A vast deal of unnecessary and injurious discussion has at different periods arisen as to the compatibility of this or that particular amusement or accomplishment, with the purity of a Christian's profession. And of some, it might be thought that they had no higher standard by which to measure their spirituality of character, than their disposition to refuse all title to it, to such as were more indulgent than themselves, in their judgment of such matters. Undoubtedly, there is room for much moral evil in the common relaxations, as there is in all the more serious pursuits of mankind. And evil everywhere and under all its proteus shapes, it is a good man's duty to withstand. That we may "be kept from the evil in the world," is to be our constant endeavor, and our habitual prayer. The light-minded and frivolous, no less than the sensual and profane, are, without question, disqualified for Christian enjoyments, as they are at variance with the proper spirit and habits of religion. Nor can we too scrupulously guard against what our experience has shown to be uncongenial with a right temper of mind, and prejudicial to those pursuits which have our solid improvement and everlasting welfare in view.

But it is familiarly true that neither the human mind, nor body, can bear incessant application to what is gravely important. The attempt to concentrate the attention for long unbroken periods, upon what affects us deeply and solemnly, must terminate in physical or mental derangement. How awful the proofs of this, which have been afforded by the so called Camp Meetings and Revivals,

to which some religionists are extremely attached! Of course, it must be admitted on all hands, that something of a higher and less serious nature is to be, and will be resorted to, when the time devoted to weightier cares has elapsed. There are, there must needs be amusements, for all men. The child has his sports, which none grudge him; which every wise and kind-hearted observer must delight to witness and to further. When he becomes a man, and shall put away childish things, will he have outgrown the wants of an imperfect nature so far, as to require no substitute for the exhilarating games of his early days? None suppose it, for all feel it to be not so. But agreeing as we do in the general necessity of some recreation, we are at odds about what it shall be. Nor is this strange. For so diversified are our constitutional tendencies, our acquired tastes, our condition in life, our means and opportunities, that what would be relief enough to one man's spirits would almost increase the depression of another's; what to some is full of delight is to others barren of enjoyment; what might be preferred if we could have it, is out of our reach or beyond our ability to procure it. The whole subject of the choice of amusements lies open to as much variety of opinion as the choice of a trade or any pursuit for a livelihood. Religion interferes not with the one, any more than with the other, except to determine that all shall select with a pure conscience their own kind, and partake in such measure only of any, as is known to be entirely compatible with an unbroken capacity for every serious occupation, and an undiminished love for every duty of life. "The natural inference," says an eminent casuist,* "from all this diversity of opinion on a point so

* Penrose.

eminently and indeed entirely practical is, that as no line can certainly be drawn to define universally either those recreations and amusements which we may, or those which we may not, account of as admissable, so we are left all of us to draw the line for ourselves, in reference to our own circumstances and character. Nor, in drawing this line, ought we to be exceedingly minute or exact. Virtue and vice do, indeed, mingle in every thing; but these things which are not of the essence of either, and which may be said properly to 'perish with the using,' it is absolute superstition to invest with so much importance, as to rest any degree of weight on the distinctions between them. And this is the more obvious, when we observe the utter insignificance of most of those distinctions which are alleged. Many a young lady, for example, is allowed to *work* in the garden, who is not allowed to *play* on the piano-forte. Yet what good either the mind or the fingers can derive from the first, which they may not derive equally from the second, it would surely puzzle ingenuity itself to discover. The fact is, that all amusements which are not evil in themselves, or which have not in them essentially the nature of sin, can be rendered sinful only in their abuse."

To return to our immediate topic. The first care of the Christian being the care of his soul, he must be prepared to protect himself from whatever the rolling and swelling tide of human affairs throws upon him, which threatens to annihilate or paralyze the powers of his better nature. He will be ready not merely to ward off infection or violence from his own soul, but to send forth from himself an influence which shall operate as an antidote and counteracting power. He will roll back the waters of spiritual death, and cast

therein some healing branch from the tree of life. Steadfast and immovable in his adherence to the principles which involve his allegiance to God, he will not only maintain them inviolate in his own person, but by all the strength they give him, act upon the understandings and hearts of others, to produce or cherish in them a like fealty to their common sovereign.

It may be useful to consider this re-acting property of the spiritual character in both points of view. In the former, that in which faith is employed as a shield to the exposed soul, protecting its life and health in their inward seat, we shall behold the individual fixedly regarding the solemn responsibility under which he stands toward God, in every position into which the varying circumstances of life may place him. Fraught with the most intimate conviction of the truth that "every one of us must give account of himself to God," — that each singly, solitarily, as if there were but himself alone to stand at the judgment bar, must meet the scrutiny of Omniscience and answer to the interrogation of Divine Purity, — he will take that truth with him into every active scene, which he inscribes upon the altar of private meditation. He will never think to soften the tone of a sin by merging it in the general example, nor to his eye will a holy quality lose one particle of its beauty in the shade of another's disfavor. He will accept nothing as right because a host of consenting voices declare it so, nor throw from him as wrong what all but his own conscience condemn. Jealously guarding his purity against the foe within the breast, he can hold no parley with enemies who lurk without. High spiritual attainments are by nothing more clearly manifested than by this elevation of soul in the midst of so much as there is every where to

bring it low, by this moral independence of the individual, maintained against the legion-tyrant of confederate opinion. It is the triumph obtained only by him, who looks upon the relations of the social state, not as a contrivance to enable the race to think and feel by bands and in masses, — not as instruments for breaking down personal responsibility, and erecting a new order of moral agents in the shape of public bodies, — not as transitory expedients to promote the ends of this life, and having no purposes to effect for a future existence, — but chiefly as God's ordinance for man's aid in his preparation for immortality. As such he will rejoice to use them. Intently seeking in all his outward condition for whatsoever may afford nutriment and stimulous, a safeguard or a support to the spiritual affections, he will most eagerly turn to advantage the means afforded for moral culture in those connexions with his fellow-beings which minister so largely to his happiness. A lover of good men and a willing disciple of the wise, it forms part of his duty and of his pleasure alike to enrich himself by the lessons of their experience, and to lay open his heart to the light of their example and counsel. For what can be done to cherish piety by sympathy and association, he will be so far from indifferent, that it will constitute one among his most valued resources, and his delight in social intercourse will be enhanced much in proportion as it shall warm and enliven the religious feelings. But he will beware of that perpetual adaptation of oneself to others, which, by whatever motive induced, has a sure tendency to pervert and degrade the soul. It is impossible that a mind imbued with the spirit of Jesus Christ, accustomed to look at all things in the light of eternity, that he who regards himself and every other human being, not as

children of the dust, doomed, after a brief interval, to lose existence forever, but as God's offspring with the image of the everlasting Father upon them, as citizens of a kingdom that shall know no end, heirs of a heavenly inheritance and an immortal life, — that he should find no uncongeniality with those who behold nothing but through the mists of sense, whose view time bounds, whose horizon this world describes. And shall he study conformity with such? Will he be undistinguishable from them, I do not say, in the outward show of mien, gesture and attire, but by the complexion, habits, and tone of his mind? To suppose him to consent to this is to dispute at once his pretensions to spirituality of character. If there be within his soul no struggle or conflict, no re-action against that spirit of the world which is alien to all which is most precious to the Christian's heart, how can he love God, and Christ, and things heavenly and divine? Were all who take upon themselves the Redeemer's name, and who are pledged by that to serve the interest of truth and virtue in whatsoever ways they have the power to do so, but to put on righteousness as a breastplate, and in the might of holy principle, to oppose themselves like a bulwark to those evil hosts, whose ceaseless labor it is to unspiritualize the church and the world, we might hope that the word of God would go forth with new power to reform and bless mankind. We speak of an individual occasionally as being above or going beyond his times. History presents us with many illustrious instances of men who rose superior to the influences which infected the moral atmosphere in which they were born and must live, who instead of following the lead of others to whom circumstances had given a con-

ventional authority, resolutely marked out their own course; and who so little heeded what was most specious or imposing in prevalent practices and principles, as to set their faces as a flint against them, refusing the smallest participation in the common degeneracy. And how must the tone of public opinion and feeling, in the time when our blessed Lord came to dwell among us, have jarred with the perfect rectitude of his mind! Were not he and his friends compelled by the very nature of their views of truth and duty, as well as by their great cause and work, to seem as those who departed from the common path to walk alone? Now, in so far as in all subsequent times, individuals or communities shall improve beyond the general measure of the race, the appearance must be the same, and the level they have obtained, can only be held by dint of a re-action against the deteriorating influences of those below them. And it is part of our duty as Christians to abandon the world where the world has abandoned its Lord. If in any particulars the avowed or actual opinions, sentiments, maxims and habits of those about us be of a quality not Christ-like, we shall eschew and resist them if we mean to hold good our loyalty to our only moral sovereign, and show our fidelity to God and truth by our want of unison with the prevalent spirit of our times. Be it a scheme of public policy, or a custom of the commercial world, or a practice in the social circle, let the offending thing be sanctioned as it may, yet whatever opposes the primary interests of the human soul, violates the purity of right principle, interferes with the claims of justice and mercy, we are bound to distinguish between the precious and the vile, to shut our hearts against the evil, and by all we

can dutifully attempt and accomplish, to oppugn it constantly.

But the effects of the Christian's spirituality will, as we have said, extend beyond the mere protection of his own soul from outward aggressions. They will be felt with a most benign power in the improvement which is originated or fostered by their influence in the bosoms of others. It is not enough for him to refuse all participation in the sins which they countenance or commit, he will be anxious to act upon them for their amendment in every particular, in which he is compelled by fidelity to his principles, to take an opposite course from that which they have adopted. And yet more, his solicitude will comprehend the interests of virtue among such as are not against, but for him, those who walk in the same path and avow the same purpose with himself, and the many who have yet to choose their way, being in the forming period of life, or in the infancy of the Christian character. It is the highest privilege of moral excellence to communicate itself. And the social principle is then most truly a blessing, when it becomes the organ and channel of a spiritual good transmitted from heart to heart. "Let your light so shine before others, that they seeing your good works may glorify your Father which is in heaven."

In order more distinctly to perceive the manner in which the elevation of religious feeling in an individual tends to raise the tone of sentiment, and the standard of character in those about him, we have only to refer to instances which real life may afford us in almost any sphere.

The influence of which we here speak may commence

long before the origin of any other kind, when no authority exists on the one side, and no dependence on the other; where no marked superiority of intellectual gifts or attainments in him who sways, gives a natural ascendancy over ignorance or mediocrity in him who is swayed; where, indeed, there is no important circumstance to be taken into the account besides the quality of greater spirituality. You shall see it among children of the same household, when religious education shall have taken effect upon one or two more thoroughly than upon the rest, those who have thus become different from the others, will seem to differ but in order to take the lead in drawing all who are united by the same natural bond, after them. And even where the ages are no wider apart than to admit of their being as equals, the more spiritual will appear as if they were meant to be guardian angels to the rest. But what a blessed effect is this, and how far-reaching! The fraternal sympathy remains unbroken, although it is now made the medium of a communion which hallows it, and which, in multiplying its benefits, secures them perpetuity. And who that observes the peculiar strength of the attachment to a virtuous home, which manifests itself in those members of a family who have been separated from it by the avocations of life, but must perceive here a means of immense spiritual good, where that home shall have been brightened by the eminent virtues of some one of its inmates. To many, has the radiance emitted from the character of a brother or a sister thus early distinguished, been diffused like a beacon-light over the dark and stormy sea of life. As our ideas of excellence are greatly dependent upon the models of it which have been presented to us in real life, how incalculable the advantage to have had at the

period when the hues in our own character were unfixed, the beauty of holiness reflected upon us from the example of one who is our equal in condition, sharing with us an intimacy such as the fraternal tie creates and sanctions, and whose virtues minister constantly to our own immediate comfort! And when it happens, as it may, that among the children of a Christian household there is one prodigal, the stray of the flock, what a fund of holy influences is kept full for him in the bosoms of the pure sisters who bewail his wanderings, of the faithful brothers who pray for his return! The persuasive of their spirituality may win him back from the sensual bondage into which he has sold himself, the charm of their consistent excellence may avail to break the spell of temptation, which had resisted the assaults of a thousand arguments of other pleaders. But what is so powerful in *this* instance, from which is excluded the collateral aid to be derived from the circumstances which combine in other relations, as the conjugal and the parental, to enhance the influence of individual character, and also whatever other additional efficiency may be derived from station, office, experience in the world, learning and talent, and the like, must with these accessory helps be abundantly more efficacious. And it is characteristic of the spiritually minded Christian, that his religious affections supply him with peculiar motives to all the moral duties which attach themselves to his relative position in society, and communicate to all the other affections in his heart a portion of their own refinement. These motives sustain him in the vigorous effort to supplant what is low by substituting in its place more elevated purposes and feelings. They give to fidelity a sacredness which makes us feel the obligations to it to be yet more solemnly impe-

rative. They make way for disinterestedness and self-sacrifice. For what can more contribute to these than to have learned to honor and appreciate in all men the same immortal nature, the same spirit of the Almighty Father? It is because men withdraw their attention from all but the meaner qualities of their race; because in their devotion to earthly things they become blind to what is heavenly; because they seldom or never bring clearly before their minds the rights and claims, the capacities and the wants of the spiritual, undying principle, that so few are inspired with the spirit of a truly Christ-like love, that it is so easy for multitudes to usurp unjustly what belongs to a fellow-creature, and so hard to give up for his sake even a trifling gratification. They of whom it may with some truth be said, "Christ is formed within them, the Hope of Glory," — who have the mind of Jesus incorporated, as it were, into their own, so closely are they bound up in him, they never, even in the lowest humiliation of their kind, lose sight of the exalted rank which man fills, considered as a being made in the similitude of God, and destined to an everlasting existence. As they increase in spirituality, they are yet more profoundly mindful of these great truths, which annihilate all the factitious distinctions which pride and passion have set up, dividing man from man. They come to see through the outward integument into the living qualities of the heart, and judging others more justly; their affectionate zeal for their highest welfare is proportionably enhanced.

The same spiritual mindedness, by divesting the other interests which mankind may hold in common, or in which they become competitors, of all their false consequence, prepares the possessor for a more widely and

permanently useful influence in the diffusion of truth, of elevated and refined motives of action, and of the hopes of Christianity, than he else had commanded. From the point of view on which he looks down upon the activities of passion and all the stirring pursuits of life, the Christian thus disposed will be enabled to detect the latent causes of collision, and know where best to interpose his conciliatory efforts; he will descry the springs of erroneous judgment, and false ideas of the true purpose of human life, and may often obtain the power to arrest by some seasonable word of caution the mistaken career, or to give a new impulse toward the right path where a fellow-traveller may seem to faulter in his steps. Without assuming an unseemly air of superior wisdom, he, by the mere effect of his own peculiar fixedness of determination to God, and duty, and Heaven, becomes a guide to his compeers. Not to enlarge further upon this topic, we may be allowed to urge with great earnestness, the necessity of keeping ever open a channel for religious influences through those affections which bind us by so close bonds to our brethren of mankind, and more especially of having uniformly before us what is to all alike the grand end and pursuit in the nearest connexions we sustain, to dwell together as heirs of the grace of eternal life, instead of excluding entirely from the account of what we intend, and what we anticipate, from the affinities of kindred or voluntary attachment. It is a plea for the due acknowledgment of all our higher and more spiritual interests together with mere sublunary prospects of enjoyment or profit, which alone we advance. And the plea is most reasonable. Overlooked as such things are by the thoughtless and impassion-

ed, the sordid and venal, the worldly and narrow-minded, they belong to the most imperative claims, demanding attention before one assumes indissoluble ties, and so long as he remains a member of any circle of affianced friends. Let none complain of their disappointment in such friendships, to whom thoughts like these respecting them have been strangers. It is a wrong done to the human heart when it is pledged by its own choice, where it cannot hope to be recognised or treated as the holy thing it is, called to the love of God and heir of immortality. That wrong can be followed by no good result. And when the heart, so disposed of, shall be bruised and lacerated in the collisions, of earthly passion, and find itself miserable through the very means by which its happiness was sought, it will own as it turns in its loneliness to God, that not He, but itself is the cause.

The true character and supreme end of the affections which are so delightful to us, must be borne in mind, if we would not condemn ourselves to see them converted into fountains of bitterness. Christianity makes intelligible to us many a mystery of unhappy hearts. It explains all that troubles us by taking us up to a higher position than our place on the earth, and pointing to our native Heavens.

They who are allied as Christian Friends, who dwell together as heirs of the grace of life, in the uniform recollection of their high calling in the Gospel of Jesus, and whose mutual love is imbued with the spirit of religion, they are united, indeed, to become better and happier. If one have made already greater attainments in moral and religious goodness than the other, while both acknowledge the same holy aim, their intimacy will operate almost insensibly to quicken improvement on the

one side, and give a new charm to virtuous progress on the other. If present qualifications be more nearly equal, they will only the more entirely sympathise with and understand one another, and their combined endeavors will tend, with greater facility, to the common end of both. How unspeakably encouraging will they find the communications of friendship so intimate, the constant presence and regard of a virtuous guide and example in the person of an endeared relative! How often will one be able to succor the weakness of the other, and inspire new courage and fortitude on occasions, when, if no religious understanding and confidence had existed between them, such aid would not have been sought or found. What an impulse to the soul in quest of everlasting life, may not those strong affections impart, which are wont to impel it to all other enterprises, to make the hardest toil sweet, and rob the sternest danger of its frowns. Enlist in the cause of his own salvation, the influence of those domestic ties, which now prompt and cheer his whole course of labor and pursuit, and who can predict too much for any individual. Thoughts of home, of "wife, children and friends," in how many instances do they not succeed in quelling the fears and nerving the arm of the warrior; in raising the heart and steadying the helm of the sailor, in strengthening the efforts and upholding the patience of the professional man! We know the power which such things have in every department of human application. Nay, we know the influence they exert even upon the moral character, preventing or moderating expense, disarming temptations to vice, and establishing steady habits. Let them but be engaged in furthering the solemn purposes of Christianity, allied with the interests of immortality, and then

the strongest among human ties will combine with those of a spiritual and celestial name, to bind us to every duty, and keep us immovably progressing in the path of life. It is the fell discordance between earth and heaven which alienates the heart from the thought of heaven. When all which gives its sweetest charm to earth shall combine with that which lends heaven its attractions to the purified soul, we may hope to be borne with an ever accelerating speed "toward the mark for the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

There is yet another element in spirituality of character, which we hasten to consider. It is that which becomes manifest in the more direct expressions of religious homage, and in those strictly personal exercises which concern the great work of Christian preparation.

"The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him." That all who respond with fervor to a liturgy, or follow with emotion the single voice which pours forth to God the supplications of a people, are not on that account alone, to be presumed true worshippers, is sufficiently apparent. There is good indeed done by even the most imperfect approaches, or attempts, to draw nigh unto God. It is much, if we can collect within the solemn precincts of the temple the souls, which have been for six days incessantly hurried to and fro by the cares of busy life. If we can bring from out of their heart-absorbing spheres of gain or pleasure, the men of the world into the house of prayer, — it is well for them, it is well for the community, — even though they do scarcely more than suffer themselves to "be still," and remember that God is! There is a power in the mere confession of the presence of Divine Majesty, which overawes the mind

that is not wholly obdurate. Let as many as may join in the words which proclaim it! Let the sinner own, even by the bending of his knee, the authority which the Moral Sovereign whom he disobeys has over him still. It may be, that, in the act of it, his long unbending spirit shall be bowed as if the hand of the Unseen were laid upon him. We deprecate most of all the utter severing of the mind at once from all the outward and ostensible, and the inward and spiritual tokens of homage toward God. And if, haply, one lingering hope remains, that by still coming up with them that keep holy time to the Mount of the Lord's house, the ungodly shall be "convinced of sin," the unspiritual be made to cease from his "confidence in the flesh," — who but would implore him to turn his face thitherward as oft as the sacred season calls us to appear before God?

Yet let us beware of the deceptiveness of a worship of the senses and imagination alone, in which the heart takes no share. The holy quiet which pervades the sanctuary; — the dim religious light falling amid shades which it does not dispel; — the organ's deep tones thrilling in the ear like sounds from the heaven of heavens; — the rapt air of the silent throng; — the subdued accents of the man of God uttering in lowliness and contrition the wants of sinners, or sending up in glowing and grateful ascriptions the thank-offerings of the good; — these, and many like things, may occasion in a susceptible mind, impressions which it may mistake for the offspring of pious thought, and may prompt it to express, as its own feelings, those which do not belong to it. By a series of skilfully applied but quite artificial means, may be produced emotions which become perfectly uncontrollable, of a religious description, but which yield to cold-

ness and stupidity upon the removal of these means as surely as the chills and heats take their turns in an intermittent fever. In the excitement of the fervid interval may be poured forth a torrent of impassioned words full of pious meaning, which in their calmer moments it might surprise or offend those who uttered them to hear from another's lips. The spiritual worshipper is on his guard against all such causes of deception, and it is his chief distinction that the fervor of his devotion is not dependent upon mere sensation, or upon the imagination alone. To him, what is addressed to the senses, and what the imagination is moved by, is, at most, a very subordinate affair, compared with what comes from the heart and reaches the heart. He may receive important aid from all the exterior part of worship, for our compound nature is in no man lifted above the need of such outward helps and symbols, but it is *only* aid, and not the substance of the homage which he designs to pay, that he looks for therein. His feeling is thorough and genuine feeling, the fruit of thought and meditation, and not a superficial ardor which is made the substitute for thought and meditation, and which is most abundant where these are least in use. His adoration of God is the tribute spontaneously given by a heart in which God is enthroned, and could not be extorted by any appeal to the baser passions, nor elicited by the application of artificial expedients for impelling the mind to pious action. With him, devotion is not an occasional state of feeling wrought up by extraordinary causes, but a part of his common experience, interwoven with the whole texture of his moral habits. The thought of God comes not like a rarely seen visitant, with strangeness and an air of constraint. Much less is it ever received as one invited by

a sort of compulsion, but not desired to be present. It is not an idea associated chiefly with the place and ceremonial of formal worship, but steals without being felt to be intrusive, an ever welcome, however, unbidden guest, upon the hours of recreation and labor, as well as upon those of contemplative leisure. There is, perhaps, no more marked proof of a truly spiritual piety, than the fact, that one is conscious of no discordance, of no violence done to his feelings, of no rude rupture, with some more agreeable object or engagement, when the call to commune with God is too articulate to be quite neglected, but rather is sensible of a degree of pain when an opportunity for religious duty is broken up unexpectedly by some inevitable circumstance. God is found, admired, and loved in his works by the spiritually minded. By them he is recognised as by no others. It is habitually consonant to them to be touched by those lighter tokens of divine agency and care which, but for the inward tendency of the soul to seek God first in all things, might have been more readily overlooked than regarded. There is a species of tact, delicate in proportion to the degree of spirituality attained, and the quickest and most apt in the most refined and exalted spirits, by which the mind, as by a sort of instinct, discerns and appropriates the materials for praise, which unobtrusively wait for the observing eye to detect them in their retirement. It bespeaks comparatively much less piety to accord promptly the homage due to Supreme Wisdom and Love, in view of those objects in nature which, by their vastness, or magnificence, or exquisite loveliness, almost extort a tribute from unwilling hearts, than when the mind in its meditative mood is ever and anon striking into one of those by-paths, which conduct through coverts to some se-

cret fountain, from whose streams are derived a perpetual blessing, but of whose origin they are not made aware, and who do not wish to be ; or than we may assume to be his who is moved to pray or give thanks on those smaller occasions, in which the tender mercies of Providence pass by us unheeded, except as the mind has been prepared to discover the hand of God in all events, and needs nothing striking to make it sensible to his goodness.

It is also unequivocal testimony to the existence of a truly spiritual piety, which we find in the long unabated relish for plain, practical duties, in connexion with a high degree of elevated devotional enjoyment. As the bodily appetite may be spoiled for simpler diet by excessive use of stimulating food, so may the taste of the soul become perverted by means of the unrestrained indulgence in rapturous emotion. It would sometimes seem as if all religion were merged in worship, and that worship one of overwrought passion, so strangely is it forgotten that "He who prays as he ought will endeavor to live as he prays."* If it were good ground for the charge of worldliness, that one was often making his religious duties yield place to his common affairs, neglecting the one in order to give more time to the other, it may be fair occasion for a suspicion of hypocrisy, that one does not scruple to make his concern for religious exercises a plea for the violation of clear moral precepts. To delight in God and in his service, is to find happiness in every thing virtuous and praiseworthy, and the qualities which belong to all just conceptions of the divine attributes cannot be lightly esteemed in themselves, or held of little consequence for us to possess and cultivate. It is monstrous

* Owen.

to pretend that one is absorbed in the love of God, while any command he has imposed is disregarded. Spiritual religion is in perfect accordance with the humblest duties of common life; and from its loftiest flights of contemplation, and its most blissful communion with God and divine things, it returns to resume these simple works of usefulness with no feeling of aversion, with every disposition to perform them as well as possible. Heaven is beheld in no such contrast with the present scene of moral discipline as to make the latter the more detestful as the former is the more eagerly desired. On the contrary, in the apprehensions of the spiritually minded there is a bond between all we do from a sense of duty, or upon the prompting of a good affection, and all we hope for of enjoyment in that more perfect state. God is worshipped, he believes, in the simplest expression of a right feeling, or principle, no less than in the song of seraphic hosts, and the homage of an adoring universe.

We are led thus to speak of those strictly personal exercises, which relate to the great work of a Christian preparation, and of which it may be said, "they who do such things declare plainly that they seek a better country, even a heavenly." The pilgrim on a foreign shore not only sends wistful thoughts towards his distant home, but expecting soon to be there, he makes ready for his return. This enters into all his plans, and to this all his occupations have some reference. And can the soul of immortal man do less for death, judgment and eternity? The servants of a household, whose lord is absent for a brief space, ponder diligently all his instructions for their conduct while he is away, and as they see the day approaching, which is fixed for his coming, they set their house in order with redoubled care. And

shall Christian stewards forget who hath said, "Occupy till I come!" — or, regardless of their Master's solemn mandate, stand all the day idle; — or, with their eyes averted from the near event which is to terminate their charge, squander the precious interval in preparing what they do not want against a day they shall never see, and making ready for their Lord only long arrears of accounts which they never examine, and accumulated proofs of their unfaithfulness in the great trust committed to them under a responsibility so awful!

The Christian is unspiritualized, indeed, in whose mind there is no well ordered preparation making for the dread future! That preparation assumes in the eye of the spiritually minded all its tremendous importance. His faith presents to him the mighty alternative on which hangs his fate, with the vividness of an unchanging reality, the solemn interest of the Day of Doom. He practices upon this clear foresight, — not alone in some season of unwonted alarm, or when a gloom which he cannot shake off has settled upon his spirits, but at all times, in every situation. To pass onward to meet the end of all things earthly with a mind indifferent to all *but* earthly things, unites in his view the maddest presumption and the most deplorable folly. He recoils, shudderingly, from all participation in such a course. He addresses himself to the momentous work of preparing for an endless life, as he would to make ready for an affair of magnitude in the future of this world, with a conviction that he has such a work to perform no less firmly established, and no less profound a sense of its importance to his happiness. He refers whatever else he is solicitous about to the great issues of life and of death, as declared in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And he judges

of the relative value of the several ends he is pursuing, according as they more or less nearly affect the decision of his account before God.

What is most essential to a Christian preparation may be comprised under two particulars. To be ready to quit this world. To be ready to meet God in another. With respect to both there are several necessary and many salutary exercises of the soul, in which its spirituality of habit and affection will be of eminent service, and be made to appear conspicuously in its true importance.

"The good man," says Antoninus, "as he lived in simplicity, tranquillity, purity, not being offended at any that they believed him *not* to live so; he also comes to the end of his life, pure, quiet, and *easy to be dissolved*, disposing himself to his lot without constraint." But how can he anticipate an easy severing of the ties which hold him here, whose whole soul is steeped in sensuality, or bound in the chains of obdurate worldliness, to the earth and earthly things? It is by moderating our attachment to what we must so soon leave, that spirituality of character prepares us to leave it. By giving the ascendancy in our hearts to what is imperishable, it loosens our hold upon that which perishes. Habituating us to the perception of how insufficient are the highest and best of the objects of desire, which are limited to the present scene, it disposes the heart to give up less reluctantly the joys of a transitory world. The sorrows of death are counterbalanced by the hopes of eternity. The supreme love of God softens the blow, which sunders us from the beloved ones whom we shall indeed see no more on earth, but whom we shall await, or who await us in Heaven. To live by faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us, by faith in the Con-

queror of Death, who hath gone before to prepare a place for them that love him, that where he is they may be also, — what is this but to be ever making ready for our departure hence, in a manner the most fitted to disarm the last enemy, and make us more than victorious over him?

To prepare to meet our God in the world to come, is to have our hearts "right" before him; to be reconciled unto and at peace with him; and both these imply spirituality of character, and require continually the aid which it procures us. What is it that obscures hope and weakens faith in God sooner than the absorbing earthliness of soul, which swallows up every better feeling of our nature, and renders sordid and loathsome to all pure moral taste the entire character of the human being? "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." The one is exclusive of the other. They cannot co-exist in the same mind. Thoughts of God and things divine are alien from the devotees of sense. To whom belong stupidity of conscience, clouded moral perceptions, insensibility to the charms of virtue, if not to men who have received not the spirit which is of God, but the spirit which is of the world? To whom appear the things of the Spirit of God even as foolishness, but to the sensual man, to him who in the unrestrained indulgence of the lower propensities of human nature has become gross and darkened his spiritual vision? Quick self-discernment, detecting sin in its earliest buds, and rendering exceedingly more difficult the extenuation of deeds of guilt, is a marked distinction in the spiritually minded. This it is which stations the moral sentinels at their posts, and maintains the vigilant caution which Jesus so often, and with such solemn earnestness, enjoined upon his followers as a

necessary part of a Christian preparation — "Watch! for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh. Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Self-inquiry, — that task so irksome to those who are unimpressed by the dangers of sin, and animated by no strong purpose to save their souls from its polluting touch and its fatal consequences, — self-inquiry is furthered and brought to successful issues by all which increases the power of faith over sense, — by all which elevates the mind in its habitual action above the perturbations of the world. The spiritual Christian will tend the life of the soul with a solicitude, to be compared only with that which broods in the heart of one who waits in fearful suspense for the changing symptoms of some malady which threatens death to the body. Lastly, and above all, there belongs to a true Christian preparation, the union of the whole nature by a living faith to Jesus Christ. This, which is so indispensable to all spirituality of character in those, who look to the Son of God as the revealer of immortality, without whom the hope of another life could have had but a faint hold upon their hearts, is the crown of all Christian effort, the consummation as it was the beginning of all Christian pursuit. Until we have found a Saviour we have sought in vain. Until we have quenched the mind's thirst at the well of living water springing up unto everlasting life, we drink of every other fountain, but to thirst again. The virtue which grows apart from Him, the true spiritual Vine, grows but to wither or to lose its fruits. The soul can in him alone find a solution to the dark mysteries of its present being, and an admission to those bright hopes which gild the passage through Death to an undying glory and an eternal joy.

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I AM THE WAY.

ADDRESSED TO THOSE WHO

"CANNOT SEE THEIR WAY CLEAR"

TO OBSERVE THE

COMMUNION.

BY S. K. LOTHROP.

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"I AM THE WAY."

These are emphatic words. They correspond to the declaration our Saviour elsewhere made, "I am the light of the world." "I am the way," "I will guide men to knowledge, virtue, and happiness. In my instructions they will find the way of truth, duty, and eternal life. In every earthly relation and condition, — in perplexity, disappointment, and sorrow, — in the temptations of youth, the toils of manhood, the infirmities of age, they will find in my example and in my precepts, the way of safety, of innocence, and peace. No doubts can arise that I cannot solve, no difficulties can occur, that I cannot remove or overcome. No clouds can darken their path that the hopes of my Gospel cannot gild, brighten and dissipate, and no sorrow sink into their bosoms which these hopes cannot relieve."

"I am the way." These words are an unlimited proposition, and are capable of universal application. But

there are some to whom it is my present purpose particularly to address them. There are individuals, who, when urged to make a profession of religious faith, to acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ before men, by communing at the table of his bounty, and receiving the spiritual nourishment which flows from "remembering Christ" after the manner of his appointment—usually answer, "I should like to do so, I feel that it is my duty, and I should be very glad to enjoy the privilege, but I cannot *see my way clear*." I have no hesitation in believing that many make this answer in sincerity and truth. I would by no means imply that it is always or often made to get rid of an unpleasant subject, or to quiet conscience, under the neglect of duty. Though sometimes this may be the case, I am satisfied that many are perplexed by doubts, fears and misgivings. The prejudices and misconceptions of early education, which still retain their influence over the mind, an humble distrust of their own character and qualifications, which is becoming, if not suffered to generate into weakness, a natural reluctance, hard to be overcome, towards taking a step so serious and important, all these serve to surround many with difficulties, and make them feel justified in saying to their consciences and their minister, "I cannot see my way clear." Reader, you may be one of these, and to you and to as many as have ever said or thought this, I address these words of our Saviour, "I am the way." A calm and conscientious examination of the subject, in all its bearings, must convince you that if you cannot see your way clear in relation to this ordinance, the darkness is in your own mind,—the obscurity hangs over your own heart. It is

not because the way is *not clear*, but because you will not open your eyes and look.

My friend, what is it that darkens your path? Where is it that you cannot see your way clear? Is it in the first place in relation to faith? Do you not see what you are to believe, in order to be a Christian, and fit yourself for the observance of this ordinance? I can tell you very easily. The scriptures tell you, in Rom. x. 9, where it is said, "that if thou shalt confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." This proposition is clear enough, is it not? There is no darkness, or difficulty, or doubt here, that I can perceive. Yet this proposition is declared by the apostle to be *saving* faith. If you believe this, and the truths necessarily implied in it, you believe enough to make you a Christian, and prepare you for the proper and acceptable observance of any Christian ordinance. This is a sufficient Christian creed. We need no other, and should adopt none, that implies or requires more than this. To creeds we trace not only the origin of the errors and corruptions which degrade and weaken Christianity, but their continuance and power. Had he not left a creed behind him, to be imposed upon his fellow disciples, the corruptor of Christianity would have been a harmless being. His errors, in all probability, would have perished with himself. Every Christian has an undoubted right, and for his own edification, it may be well for him, to express his own ideas of the doctrines of the gospel in his own language, and in as many distinct propositions as he chooses; but there is a serious objection to the adop-

tion of these human expositions of Christian truth as the creeds of Christian churches, and the investing them with any sort of authority or importance. Did they accomplish their avowed object, there might be some shadow of reason in their favor. But in this they entirely fail. The object is to produce uniformity of opinion, which can no more be produced than uniformity of shape and feature, — and while they fail of effecting their express purpose, they have seldom failed of introducing the very evils they were intended to prevent, controversy and separation. They have ever been fatal, and must have a tendency to be fatal to freedom of mind, independence of judgment, and sincerity of heart. There is in Christianity, indeed, a power superior to the power of creeds, and all the ignorance, prejudice, superstition and bigotry, which they serve to cherish in the mind. The sacredness of antiquity, and the arm of civil authority, cannot preserve creeds. They have fallen, and are continually falling and changing, before the progress of Christian truth. Throughout the scriptures, "the golden index of prophecy" continually points to a period when this truth shall attain "the lofty mountain of wide dominion," and shine in the clear light of perfect purity; and no creeds, framed by human ingenuity and supported by human power, can prevent the ultimate progress of our religion to that simplicity and purity in which when "the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ," it shall reign over the whole earth in permanent and unrivalled majesty.

Still they are evils and impediments, and so far as they are helps, if indeed they are so in any degree, they are unnecessary. The bible is creed enough, and something

similar to the simple declaration of the apostle, "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe that God hath raised him from the dead," is, so far as the article of faith is concerned, foundation enough for a covenant that shall secure the union and promote the efficiency of any church. The church was not instituted, the ordinance of the supper was not appointed to produce and preserve purity and uniformity of faith, but purity of life and conformity with the divine precepts. That you may acceptably and improvingly observe it, it is not necessary that you agree in all respects with him who breaks the bread, or those with whom you receive it. All you have to ask yourself, then, my reader, is, not whether you believe with your minister or his church, — not whether your mind is entirely settled upon the abstruse and speculative points of Christian faith, which have agitated the world for centuries, but simply whether you believe that Jesus was the Messiah whom God promised and sent into the world, and raised from the dead. Is there any difficulty in believing this? Have you any doubt about this proposition? or have you any hesitation in saying that your faith is settled with regard to the fact? I will venture to say you have none. Have you any doubt about this being enough for you to believe? You cannot have; for the apostle says, expressly, if you believe this, you shall be saved. These facts, believed in with that faith of the heart which is unto righteousness, constitute saving faith, for it will save from sin. It cannot be with regard to faith, then, that you cannot see your *way clear*; for the way is pointed out to you with the most explicit and direct simplicity.

Where is it, then, that you cannot see your way clear? Is it in relation to practice? Do you not see what you are to do? I can tell you. The scriptures tell you. "Ye are my disciples," says our Saviour, "if ye do whatsoever I command you." Did Jesus command anything that you do not understand? Is not the way of his commandments clear? Is not his gospel designed to be a rule of life? And is it not a clear, universal, complete, practicable, obligatory rule? Read his history and his discourses. Was it not his great object to instruct men in their duties, and guide them in the right conduct in life? He sought not to instruct them in what are termed the mysteries of faith, or to involve them in curious and unprofitable speculation, or to amuse them by refined and striking thoughts; he opened not his lips, he raised not his voice, save to dissuade from sin, or exhort to holiness, or inspire with motives to penitence and goodness. And are not his instructions of complete and universal application, descending to the various conditions of social and domestic life, to the relation of parent and child, neighbor and friend, ruler and subject, to every talent possessed, to every opportunity enjoyed? Whatever may be your situation and character in the world, can you go to the gospel, and not find there guidance, encouragement, and comfort in the way of your duty? Are you poor, are you not taught how to bear your poverty with meekness and contentment? Are you rich, are you not instructed in the obligations of wealth, and told to be ready to distribute, and willing to communicate, and to make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, by using it as God intended, and the

wants of our fellow-men require that it should be used? Are you prosperous, are you not told how you should prosecute your business in these simple precepts "be not slothful in business," "do unto others as ye would have others do unto you," "seek ye first the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven?" Are affliction and disappointment mingled in your cup, is not your duty clearly pointed out in the injunction, "mourn not as those who are without hope?" Are you a man of influence and authority, of eminent station, of high endowment, can you not find all your obligations in the story of the servant who had ten talents entrusted to his care? And if obscurity, ignorance, and a lowly place are your lot, does not the condemnation of the slothful possessor of only one talent show you that even these can and must be improved? Are you given to anger, is it not written "let not the sun go down upon thy wrath?" Are you given to indulgence, does not our Saviour say, "whosoever would be my disciple, let him take up the cross and *deny* himself?" Are you thoughtless, is it not written, "let us who are of the day be *sober?*" Are you despondent, is it not said, "charity *hopeth* all things?" Are you indifferent, is it not said "be *fervent in spirit?*" Are you worldly and irreligious, does not every page of the New Testament bear to ye the call, "repent ye, repent ye?" Are you already religious, serious, devout, does not the injunction to "forget the things that are behind, and press forward to the mark of the prize of your high calling in Christ Jesus" point out to you your further duty, — and are not all these duties, in all these relations, practicable? Do they demand of you any thing beyond your power, or

incompatible with the circumstances in which the providence of God has placed you? No. The Master who hath called you to his service, and invites you to his table, demands no virtue, whose attainment is impossible. He says, indeed, "be ye *perfect*;" yet it is only the perfection of which man is capable, to which he exhorts. He urges us to copy the divine goodness; yet only so far as the human can be assimilated to the divine nature; and every duty he enjoined, he himself performed, every virtue he inculcated, he himself, — who, according to the epistle to the Hebrews, was made in all respects like his brethren, and tempted as we are, he himself displayed. The resignation he demands, the entire acquiescence with the will of Heaven, the cordial and absolute surrender of ourselves, and every thing we possess or desire to God, is a severe and difficult virtue, — yet "sweat, even like drops of blood," fell from him in his agony in the garden, his simple and resigned prayer was, "Father, thy will be done." To forgive our enemies is difficult. Nature rebels against it. Yet Jesus, amid the shame and suffering of crucifixion, made an earnest intercession for his murderers, — and many a martyr has gained the spirit and the power to do the same in the hour of trial, and we can gain it also, and must gain it, if we would be Christians. "Ye are my disciples, if ye do whatsoever things I command you." There is no one of his commands, which, rationally interpreted, we cannot obey, and that obedience is of indispensable obligation; all pretensions to discipleship are vain without it. The principles of the gospel must be applied, its spirit cherished, and the virtues of Jesus copied, and his temper and pre-

cepts associated with all the sentiments, and employments, and pleasures of ordinary life. We have then, in the gospel, a clear, complete, universal, practical, and obligatory rule of conduct. We are told what we are to do in every relation and situation of life. We are shown that we can do it, and assured that we must do it if we would enjoy the name and happiness of Christian disciples. It cannot be then in relation to practice, that you cannot *see your way clear.* No obscurity, that I can perceive, hangs over any of the moral precepts or moral requirements of the gospel. You cannot have any doubt, no one it seems to me can have any doubt in the usual circumstances of life, as to his Christian duties and obligations. Jesus Christ said truly and beautifully, "I am the *way.*" In his distinct, comprehensive, sermon on the mount, in the matchless living sermon of his life, we are taught our duty, in so plain and simple a manner, that he who just glances at these sermons, *must see his way clear.*

Where then, is the point of obscurity and darkness? Where is the place that *your way* becomes so obscure and intricate, that you cannot see it? It is not in relation to *faith,* because you know what you are to believe and confess, in order to be *saved.* It is not in relation to works, because you are expressly told what you must do to become disciples of Christ. Now faith and works, what we are to believe, and what we are to do, the inward principle, and the outward conduct, constitute the *whole of religion.* I have shown that it cannot be in relation to these, that you cannot *see* your way *clear.* Where, then, is it? I for one must confess that I can-

not tell. I have always regarded Christianity as a light that could guide, and cheer, and comfort, the humblest, weakest, simplest child of earth,—as something that had been hid from the wise and prudent, the conceited disputers and reasoners of this world, and revealed unto babes; as something that every ear could hear, and every heart feel and understand. When people say therefore that they do not see their way clear, to observe a simple memorial of its author,—that they do not see their way clear to obey one of the last direct commands of their Saviour, I must confess that I cannot tell, I cannot understand, what they mean, — and I entreat you, reader, if you have been in the habit of using this phrase, and have quieted your mind in the neglect from year to year, of a Christian profession, by saying "I cannot see my way clear," I entreat you to consider, and see if you can tell what you mean by this phrase. Has it any force? Has it any meaning? Is it not a vague, indefinite expression that you have got into a habit of using, as if it had some magic power to excuse your neglect? I know what you will probably say you mean by it. You will say you mean you are not good enough; — you will say that you do not see your *way clear*, not in relation to what you ought to believe and do, but in relation to character and conduct, what you are and do. How many weeks, months, years, do you think this excuse ought to serve? If you really feel unprepared, and unworthy, and are at the same time earnestly desirous of observing this ordinance, how long think you would it take you, not to become a "perfect man in Christ Jesus," but to so far fill your heart with a christian spirit, and conform your con-

duct to a Christian life, that you would be readily accepted by any Christian church, and would be justified in using this ordinance for the great purpose, for which it was instituted, a *means of advancement in Christian piety and godliness?* Alas! my friend, does not some suspicion hang over your sincerity, if you say, month after month, you are not good enough, and yet grow no better? Does not conscience tell you that the secret is, not that you are not prepared, but that you do not *wish to be prepared?* And though you are unwilling to acknowledge it even to yourself, are you not guilty of supposing that your Christian obligations are things which you can assume or throw off at pleasure, and that while not a communicant, you have a liberty of indulgence, which would be infringed if you were? As if the neglect of one command, "do this in remembrance of me," made the neglect and violation of many others less sinful! God forbid, that I should exhort you, my reader, or any one to come forward and observe this ordinance hastily, irreverently, or without prayerful meditation upon his own purpose, and the design of the institution; but with this meditation, I exhort you and all to observe the simple memorial of himself the Saviour has appointed. Are you young, with the passions of youth within, and the temptations of youth around you? I call upon you to strengthen your best affections, and arm yourself for the warfare of life, and draw down upon you the blessing of God, by communing at the table of our Lord. Is the seal of manhood upon your brows? Are its cares and duties weighing upon your spirits, with a weary pressure? I invite you to taste of that cup which alone can give you joy, and satisfy your thirst for happiness. Are you old?

have you borne the burden and heat of the day, and are you fast sinking into the vale of years? I entreat you to gather up your souls and sit at the feet of Jesus, — and fit yourself, by communing at the table of his bounty, for a holier converse with him in a better world. Whatever are your years, your condition, or your prospects, — whether youth, manhood or age, is your lot, — I entreat you, as erring, sinful, dying men, to come with humility, and gratitude, and penitence, to this memorial of our crucified Lord. Christ hath invited you, — accept ye the invitation. The Master hath come, and called you, — obey ye the call. He has declared himself to be "*the way*." Walk in the path of his example, with a perfect heart and a willing mind, and ye cannot go astray.

1st Series. No. 104.

AN

ARGUMENT

FROM SCRIPTURE HISTORY

AGAINST THE TRINITY.

BY S. G. BULFINCH.

PRINTED FOR THE

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BOSTON,

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I. R. BUTTS, PRINTER, SCHOOL ST.

AN

ARGUMENT

FROM SCRIPTURE HISTORY

AGAINST THE TRINITY.

In the examination of history, we are frequently at a loss what opinion to form with respect to the character and influence of some eminent man. Even could we rely with full confidence on the judgment of the historian, perhaps that judgment is not distinctly expressed. In such a case we turn for instruction to the course of events, in which the person in question was engaged. We observe how he was regarded by the people of his own age, what was his conduct, and what was that of others in reference to him. Thus we acquire a more thorough knowledge of the individual than we could obtain from the description of him communicated by the annalist.

It is thus with the testimony of scripture respecting the character and offices of Jesus Christ, and his connexion with the Supreme Being. We are more likely to form a correct idea concerning these from observing his

own conduct and that of others with regard to him, with the part he bore in the events of holy writ, by looking deeply into the minds of those around him, and those to whom his advent had been foreshown, than by selecting here and there an obscure passage, separate from its connexion, and which different great and good men have understood in the most different senses.

In commencing such an historical investigation, we adopt a general division, founded on the order of time; examining first the ideas entertained of our Saviour previous to his advent; then tracing the events of his own life; in the testimony they afford us relative to his connexion with the Supreme; and finally pursuing the same course with the transactions of the apostolic age. It is our aim thus to discover how far the general testimony of the divine dispensations is consistent with the doctrine of a Trinity, or with the deity of our Saviour.

I. And, firstly, with what does the Old Testament present us? It tells us of one God, in whose unity we are not informed that aught of division enters. One God, the eternal Spirit, brought into existence the world, and plants, and animals, and men. That Being, the father of all, selected for himself a peculiar nation. By successive prophets he revealed to them his will, and in part his nature. The conceptions given of the latter, represented him as a spiritual and invisible God; and on no point was so much stress laid, as on that of his unity. No danger appeared to be apprehended that those who heard might carry too far the doctrine of his undivided nature.

Another being, too, is pointed out in the Old Testament,

as one who was at length to appear on earth. In the earliest history of the human race, he is supposed to have been designated as "the seed of the woman." Subsequently, a patriarch received the promise that in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed. Another patriarch, dying, spoke of one to whom the gathering of the people should be. The meek lawgiver of the Hebrews, who never would have ventured to compare himself with the living God, declared, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, *like unto me*, him shall ye hear." Later predictions confirmed the same divine testimony, that a great prophet, an anointed priest, a heaven-descended king, was at length to appear on earth. But did they assert that this delegate of the Most High should be the Most High himself? Did they qualify the repeated declarations of the divine unity, by proclaiming that the promised Saviour was the second person in a Triune God? Did the people so understand them? Have they thus understood in any age? Ask their descendants. Go to the Jews of our own day, and question them if either they or their ancestors have ever received the doctrine of a Trinity, or considered it taught in their scriptures. They will tell you, No. And if you fancy that they have corrupted their religion, — and, contrary to all analogy, have corrupted by simplifying it, — then go to the records of history, and point out, if you can, when the corruption took place. Turn to the period, if it can be found, when the Jews ceased to believe the doctrine of a Trinity. Find in the whole Old Testament, a prayer addressed to the Triune God; or detect in the writings of later Hebrew sages a single admission, that

God was ever worshipped in Israel, except as the one, undivided Spirit, without the offence being followed by divine indignation. It cannot be done. The Old Testament worthies knew but of one God in one person; the Jews of modern days acknowledge no other. The Messiah was foreshown, believed in, and warmly anticipated; but it was as the delegate of God's power and love, not as himself, the Supreme Intelligence.

The fact will perhaps be admitted, but with the assertion, that the doctrines of the Trinity and of our Saviour's deity are peculiar glories of the Christian revelation, and first openly proclaimed by our Lord himself. Let us pause and contemplate the nature of such an admission. Can the ancient and the new religion be inconsistent with each other? Were the inspired prophets of old ignorant of a doctrine which is now regarded as chief among the fundamentals of religion? Was the old dispensation more simple and spiritual than the new, — more simple and spiritual than the truth?

II. But in the new revelation the hitherto undiscovered truth must at length be made known. To the preaching of Jesus then we turn, expecting to find there, if it is to be found at all, the assertion of the important doctrine. And surely, if it were revealed, there would be no difficulty in discovering the time and circumstances of the revelation. The communication of a truth so stupendous would produce feelings and events too remarkable to be passed over in silence by all the four historians of our Saviour's life. What must have been the thoughts of those around him, when he asserted for the first time, "I am God!" On the part of those who opposed him, how

loud must have been the expression of resentment! How quickly would the appeal be made to that law by which the advocate of new gods was sentenced to death. And on the part of his disciples, when they for the first time heard from one who had lived among them, who had conversed and eaten with them, whom some of them had known from feeble childhood, — when they heard from him the claim to Supreme Divinity, can human language describe their varying sensations? They shrink back aghast at the idea that the All-seeing One has condescended to be one of them, in a human form. Their fervent love for the man Jesus cannot enable them to endure the bodily presence of the infinite God. Can they stand erect and look on him before whom angels veil their faces?

And is it possible that the memory of such a scene should pass away? Is there not one reference remaining, to show us that such a scene was ever presented? Of the four historians of the life of Jesus, has not one related, or even remotely indicated the occurrence of that solemn hour? The Jews procured his condemnation on minor and false charges of dishonoring the temple and preaching resistance to Cæsar. Did they utterly forget his bold claim to divine honors, — a claim which, unless they had admitted its truth, would have subjected him at once to the heaviest punishment inflicted by the law. Did his followers, after hearing the dread assertion, continue to remain in his presence, to converse with him in terms of respectful freedom, and to arrange themselves daily around a table, at which the Ruler of the universe presided? All-holy One! forgive the expression, for in vindication of thy unapproached divinity it is employed.

Thus indeed it was. If our Saviour's declaration of his own deity ever took place, not a trace of it remains. Twice indeed did the Jews seek to put him to death, when he uttered words which they chose to understand as implying a claim of equality with God ;* but in each instance the reply of our Saviour showed that his meaning had been misunderstood. No. If the Man of Sorrows ever declared to his disciples, or to the world, that he was the Supreme God, that declaration, stupendous as it was, has been left by his four historians, unnoticed, if not forgotten.

Yet there were occasions on which our Lord seemed purposely to assume the state which belonged to his high office; and in these instances, there was no lack of attention on the part of the sacred writers, in relating every incident which occurred. They inform us of his question to the apostles, "Whom say ye that I am?" and Peter's answer, "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." They tell of his entrance into Jerusalem as a king, the son of David coming in the name of the Lord. They record his baptism and his transfiguration, when he was recognised once and again by a voice from heaven as the well beloved son of God. To one who is satisfied with such repeated testimony, from the apostles, from the people, and from heaven itself, the office and dignity of Jesus are sufficiently plain. He was the promised and long expected king ; he was the son, the well beloved Son of God. He was not more than this, unless the divine voice which proclaimed his dignity, left untold

* John v, 18, and x, 30—33.

the greatest, the most wonderful, the most important fact of all.

Few facts in the gospel history are more distinctly established than the existence in the minds of the disciples, through the whole course of our Lord's ministry, of a belief that the chief end of his mission was the re-establishment of the Jewish power. They looked for the great triumph of the Messiah, in the deliverance of Judea from the Romans, and the subjection of all surrounding nations to the temporal dominion of the Son of David. This belief at one period led two of them to solicit that they might enjoy the place of honor, seats at the right and left of their master, in his day of power. Even after the resurrection, they proposed to him the anxious inquiry, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" Can this rooted belief in the temporal, visible, human nature of the Messiah's kingdom, have existed in the minds of the disciples, in connexion with an acknowledgment of their master as the God of the universe. No. Narrow and imperfect as were their views of heavenly things, to this extreme of inconsistency, we have no proof that they had arrived. Neither did the Jewish nation anticipate, nor the disciples of Jesus believe, that the eternal and invisible God would assume a human form, and reign in person at Jerusalem. He whom they expected thus to reign, was the Messiah, the anointed and the sent of God.

III. But their ideas, it may be said, were at length corrected. After the ascension of Jesus, they were informed by divine agency of the spiritual nature of his kingdom, and at the same time made acquainted with

the divinity of their now ascended master. The day of Pentecost, on which they received the holy spirit, is the date we must assume for this supposed communication. Now, at length, they perceive the facts so long hidden from them, that Jesus is God, and that the eternal spirit exists, not in one person, but in three. What astonishment, what awe, what inconceivable emotions of joy and dread, must fill their hearts. Do they not burst forth in spontaneous worship of him who was their brother, but whom now for the first time they recognise as their God? Is not the truth of his deity the leading idea in all they say on that memorable occasion? Is it possible that in the address, still preserved, which Peter, the most ardent among them, then delivered, there should be not one word of all this? Not only so, but that the dependence of Jesus on the Father should be clearly asserted, and without one word of qualification? Listen to the statement of that discourse.* "Ye men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a *man approved of God* among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which *God did by him* in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; him, being delivered by *the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain; *whom God hath raised up.*" "Therefore, being *by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father* the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that *God hath made* that same

* Acts ii, 22.

Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." Throughout the discourse there is found a constant distinction between the Saviour, as the recipient and medium of divine bounty, and God as its giver. It was then by a strictly Unitarian declaration of faith that the apostles commenced their public ministry after the ascension of Jesus; and the efficacy of the sentiments they taught, may be traced in the conversion, at that time, of three thousand souls.

It was the same wherever the apostles went. Look through their discourses, as recorded in the book of Acts, and everywhere you find them establishing as the pillar of their faith, not the doctrine of the Trinity, not the doctrine that Jesus was God, but the simple truth that Jesus was the *Christ*, the *anointed* of God, a title in itself implying his inferiority to the being who had anointed him. When Paul found at Athens an altar to the unknown God, he did not avail himself of the occasion to introduce doctrines which the Athenians probably might have willingly received, accustomed as they were to the worship of deified men, and to the mysterious triads of their own philosophers; but he declared the nature of that Being whom they already worshipped, though in ignorance. "God, that made the world and all things therein," a God who never was seen, who never bore a corporeal form, who "dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." This God, the spiritual, universal father, "hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness *by that* MAN *whom*

he hath ordained ; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that HE *hath raised him* from the dead."* Could the Athenian converts, from this discourse, have collected the doctrine of the Trinity, or the divinity of Christ? Thus it is continually in the discourses recorded as having been addressed to those who listened for the first time to the instructions of an apostle. Those inspired preachers never, as far as their words remain, made known on such occasions the deity of their blessed master, or the existence of a Trinity in the Supreme Being. They taught simply that Jesus was the anointed of God, and had brought the glad tidings of the remission of sins on repentance, and of eternal life. And among their discourses of a different character, in one instance only is the name of God found in a connexion which refers it to our Saviour Jesus Christ, — having been there introduced by the carelessness or design of a transcriber.

It is worthy of remark too, that much as the early Christian teachers were persecuted by their Jewish brethren, the assertion of Christ's divinity was never assigned as a reason for this persecution. Of all doctrines which have been taught by Christians, this would have been most suited to excite the indignation of the Jews ; not only because opposed to their strict ideas of the divine unity, but because he for whom divine honors were claimed, was one who had died on the cross by the decree of their own rulers. But in their repeated accusations, not one word is to be met with, implying even a

* Acts xvii, 22.

suspicion on their part that a doctrine so obnoxious was entertained. "Ye intend," said the High Priest to the Apostles, "ye intend to bring *this man's blood* upon us."* Stephen was accused of blasphemy against the temple and the law. Paul was supposed to have brought unsuitable companions into the holy place, and the real cause of the deep hostility manifested against him, was the fact that he had undertaken to teach the Gentiles, without compelling his converts to become Jews. But neither before Jewish High Priest nor Roman governor, was the accusation breathed against a disciple of Jesus, that he had claimed for his master an equality with God.

Such is, in a brief outline, the historical testimony of scripture on the connexion of our Saviour with the Supreme Being. From the earliest ages, and through all periods of the Jewish history, God was proclaimed as One, Spiritual, and Invisible; and the Messiah foretold, as his exalted and honored, but not equal representative. The Saviour came, in form and fashion as a man, but free from human imperfections of character. As such he is described by the four historians of his life; as such we at this day see him, hear him, and sympathize with him. As such his disciples viewed him, for they maintained with him constantly a familiar intercourse, such as might connect human beings with the greatest and best of produced intelligences, but inconceivable as existing between men and an incarnate God. Notwithstanding the deep impression which such an astounding communication must have produced, there is not in scripture the slightest allusion to the moment when Jesus

* Acts v, 28.

made known to his followers his own supreme divinity. His opponents, instead of assuming the strong ground of declaring that he had claimed equality with God, resorted to far sought pleas, which put to the blush their own malevolence, and manifested the innocence of their victim. And when he had died and risen again, when, if ever, the revelation of his divinity must at length have been made to his disciples, then, in their first public address, and on each successive occasion, as far as the sacred historian has informed us, they taught the simple Unitarian system. The Jews, violently opposed to them, and devotedly attached to the doctrine of the divine unity, never accused them of an interference with that doctrine, never fancied it would appear, that they conceived of Jesus as a God. Such is the general testimony of the Jewish and Christian dispensations against the doctrines of the Trinity, and the supreme divinity of Christ.

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CHRISTIANITY

AS A

PURELY INTERNAL PRINCIPLE.

By CONVERS FRANCIS.

PRINTED FOR THE

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BOSTON,

LEONARD C. BOWLES, 147 WASHINGTON STREET.

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I. R. BUTTS, PRINTER, SCHOOL ST.

CHRISTIANITY

AS A

PURELY INTERNAL PRINCIPLE.

If we examine, with careful observation, the various forms and modifications in which religion has appeared in the world, we cannot fail to remark how much men have loved the outward, and how little they have understood or cared for the inward. I do not mean merely, that there has been always a great passion for imposing ceremonies, but that in general, all those expedients, by which the work of religion is done abroad and out of the heart, have usually been in high favor. Amidst the striking varieties of thought and customs with regard to sacred subjects, there has ever been one great and leading division, — the division into those who have taken the exterior for every thing, and those who have taken it for little or nothing, — the short-sighted, who are satisfied and charmed with vain pomp and busy stir, and the searching minds, who are too sober to be entranced by modes, or forms, or bustle, — the ignorant, who dwell forever in circumstances, and never penetrate beyond the shell or the frame work in which spiritual truth is

enclosed, — and the enlightened, who look for it beyond all the avenues and preparations men have contrived, who find it dwelling apart and in simplicity, and go there to hold converse with it, — in short, the captives of sense, and the freemen of thought. Among all the confused and fluctuating notions of mankind, you may always trace the line that has marked out this radical distinction. Thus in the pagan world of old, the worship of the gods by means of showy ceremonies, was made imposing to overawe and gay to attract; fables and mysteries were gathered around sacred things, that the community might have something tangible and stirring; festivals created and gratified the passion for excitement, and omens and divinations furnished superstition with the food she always craves. But all along, there was a class, small in number indeed, who thought of these things very much as enlightened men think of them now, who stood aloof from these vanities on the mount of illumination, who saw some of the pure forms of simple truth and loved them, who communed with their own spirits, and found there the living principle standing forth in its heavenly beauty, who, as far as they went, belonged to the great general order of true believers, worthy of a Christian's praise, inasmuch as they had visions, however defective, of the true and the spiritual. So likewise it was with the ancient Hebrews. Their system was surrounded and guarded by a cumbersome and unwieldly ritual; it was in a great degree bound up in forms and ordinances; for when their polity was instituted by their great lawgiver, they were at that low stage of mental culture, in which a people always need to have religion presented to them in connexion with a long array of positive and outward ob-

servances; the consequence was, that it frequently degenerated, as their own history testifies, into a service of the hands and the lips, into something which could be measured by times and quantities, which was attached to days and shows, and required certain acts to be performed in its honor, like the homage paid to an Eastern prince. Still, there were among them men who had nobler gifts and a better sight, who lifted the veil and looked into the interior of divine things, who knew that many of the prescriptions of the Mosaic institutions were necessary only because the nation was not wise enough to receive any thing better, and who rebuked indignantly the gross abuses that sprung up among their people. A similar distinction has existed under Christianity. At first, it was proclaimed and received simply as a living principle of moral and spiritual improvement; and such it remained for the most part in the days of its poverty and persecution. But when it was brought forth out of tribulation into strength and prosperity, when it came to stand even by the side of the throne, and was patronised by the powerful, then it began to be less regarded as a kingdom of righteousness within the soul; then men began to disrelish its spiritual simplicity, and to be desirous of building up outworks around it for ornaments and for resting-places. The taste for externals increased, till it produced abuses scarcely outdone by those of Paganism or Judaism. Saints were multiplied to take the place of heathen deities; a great machinery to operate upon the senses and the passions were set in motion; processions and pilgrimages, the crucifix and the frankincense, bowings and prostrations, made up the service of God; and from the beginning to the end of the year, the whole was

a scene of parade, which men will call magnificent or childish, according to the associations they may have been accustomed to connect with it. Thus it was, and is now, in the largest part of Europe under the old church. Under the new, or Protestant church, the same disposition is developed in other forms, not so obvious and palpable, but belonging almost as much to the mere exterior. Instead of the Virgin Mary, and days of fasting and feasting, and holy water, and relics of saints, and other kindred things, we have different arrangements for providing outward excitements; we have for this purpose modes of superstition, which, if they are less ludicrous, are more stern and uncompromising than the old modes; we have the visions and pratings of fanaticism without the venerable character in which it once clothed itself; we have solemn commotions and consecrated devices, which serve to keep men in externals nearly as well as shows and pilgrimages did in days of yore; we have the traditions of other ages, and the speculations of heated or wandering minds to be contended for under the name of doctrines; we have the spirit of proselytism and party to exercise and gratify the energies of spiritual pride; we have wide-reaching plans to employ the restless spirits who are more busy than useful, and more zealous than wise; we have arts for swelling the influence and numbers of a sect, and the diseased craving for the excitement of frequent meetings; we have names to be given out as watch-words and to be known by as badges, and other like things, which sufficiently indicate, that the form is changed, rather than the thing, and that, if the disposition to connect external bustle with religion be checked in one direction, it will shoot

forth and display itself in some other direction. Yet there has always been, both in the old church and in the new, a class of deeper thinkers and better minds, who have loved the spirit far more than the letter, — who have gone beyond the outward form, and seen and cherished the inward power. Among the Catholics, this class was at times large and important ; and in some instances, by a very natural reaction, they passed to the opposite extreme, as in the strange reveries, the visionary quietism, and the striving after an absorption in the pure love of infinite beauty, which were set forth and inculcated by Madame Guyon, and even by the pious, amiable, and highly gifted Fenelon. Nor have Protestants escaped the same mistake, from the same source, as we learn, among other cases, from the history of that excellent community of Christians called Friends, who have sometimes carried to such excess the favorite notion of an inward light and a silent waiting for spiritual influences. Yet even these occasional extravagances have served to indicate, only the more strongly, that striving and longing for the hidden power, the interior of religion, which has constituted the predominant trait of one general class of minds, from the earliest ages of the world.

Thus from the remotest period, and under every form of sacred things, may be traced the great and deep distinction between those who are busy upon the outside, and those who penetrate to the inward spirit. Now Christianity was the first and only system, which professed to build its kingdom wholly within the soul of man. Other systems have imparted many pure instructions, and inculcated many good precepts ; but they have fastened themselves essentially to all the poor apparatus of

forms, so that they could not be separated from them, and live; or they have linked themselves to human power, so as to depend for their strength on worldly plans and policy. So did not Christianity; I mean, so did it not, as it came from him who taught it. I know that men have often and widely turned it aside from this purely spiritual character; but I speak of what it is in its own nature, and as it was given to the world by Him who sealed his teaching of it in his blood. As such, it is purely an internal religion. It asks for no province but the affections, principles, and motives of man, — for no throne but his heart. Its aim is to purify and sweeten the fountains in the deep places of the soul, that refreshing influences may thence go forth in a more hallowed life and more praiseworthy deeds; and when it has effected this, it has effected its great and main purpose. In the connection which it has with forms, it remains independent of them; for it prescribes but two rites, and those of the plainest and simplest character which symbols can have. While it commits not the error of regarding man as a being to be always wrapt in spiritual meditation, it dwells not among the poor and corruptible things of sense. Therefore it stands free, as no other system has ever done, from the slavery of times and places. Whether it be at the fireside of domestic happiness, or in the wilderness where human foot has never been before, — whether at the altar of the sanctuary or on the bed of sickness, — in the busy circle of the world's cares and occupations, or in the solitude of retirement, still the Christian has, and still he carries, his religion with him, because it belongs to the inner man, because it is an essential part of his moral being, and because the words which Jesus has spoken unto him are spirit and life

This leading purpose of the Christian dispensations was strikingly developed at its very origin, when its truths came from the lips of the Great Teacher. It stood in strong contrast with the prevalent speculations and prevalent feelings of the day, insomuch that men wondered at it as a strange thing, when they heard the instructions of the lowly Nazarene. Jesus found his countrymen sufficiently *religious*, if that venerable epithet may be used to express a blind devotion to all the puerile, though consecrated, usages of a worn out system, a fond cleaving to all the prescriptions of tradition, and those poor and narrow conceptions of Jehovah which grew out of Jewish exclusiveness. But of the connexion of a moral purpose with religion, as its object, they seem scarcely to have had a thought. Now I think it may be made manifest, that Jesus labored primarily and chiefly, as for the great work of his mission, to restore and strengthen that bond between religion, as an institution, and the moral effect, as an end, which had for a long time been either entirely rent asunder, or loosened so as to have no efficacy, that he sought mainly to rekindle the extinguished moral feeling of his nation, and to set before them the great truths relating to God and sacred things in such a manner as to make those truths instinct with a moral vitality, — and that when we contemplate his life on earth, from the time when the spirit of truth and purity rested on him under the symbol of the peaceful dove, to the solemn hour when the exclamation — "it is finished" — closed the great work of suffering benevolence, we see one leading design pervading the whole, — the design of effecting in and for man that salvation which consists in a fitness for the appropriate happiness of a spiritual being.

When we say that such is the character of our Master's religion, we state no trifling proposition. It is a truth of vast importance, written on the very front of the Christian system, that its design is a *moral* design. It is a fact, which should lie at the bottom of all our thoughts on this subject, that the religion we profess is one which never reaches its object, till it cultivates and improves the spiritual principle in man, till it makes us happy by making us good, till it brings us to act on the unshaken conviction that the path of duty and the path to heaven are always the same. Every thing short of this is just so far short of Christianity; every thing that accomplishes this, just so far accomplishes the purpose of Christianity. This is a point of view in which I love to contemplate religion. I love to consider it as the kingdom within, as the healthy life of the inner man, the quiet, but strong power, producing effects that, like the dew of heaven, lie longest and most plentifully in the shade. It is the education of the heart for eternity; and in this character it has a nobler importance, a more precious value than in any other; in this character it is far more worthy of our love, than it can be under any of those forms in which it is exhibited by misguided zeal, or the love of parade, that men may gaze after it, and shout — lo here! or, lo there! There is an undying spirit in man, and Christianity proposes to open, enlarge, and purify that spirit, to develope all its capacity for goodness and happiness, and to lift it up towards the Everlasting Source from which it first came. In this stage of man's being, the soul has a warfare with the influences that would drag her down to low and corruptible things, with temptation in all its strength, with sin in all its forms. Christianity proposes to preside

over this warfare, to give the victory to the better part, to chain down the sensual and animal nature to the office which alone God designed it to execute, to encourage and strengthen every budding forth of virtue, however feeble at first, to beat down the assaults of passion, and bridle head-long propensities, to lift the load of anxiety and despondence from the free spirit, that it may go on unshackled in its path of immortality, and be glorified. Here is the work which our religion wishes and claims to do; here is its peculiar province; here is its interior dwelling; here is its hidden beauty, and its secret power. Shall we take in exchange for this the flourish and bustle, which are ever abroad, glittering, and talking largely, and working on the outside, but holding no companionship with man's moral nature, having no treasures within to bestow, which the world cannot give and cannot take away? No; this would indeed be to throw away the precious jewel that we might keep the gaudy casket — to feed upon the husk and reject the bread. If we consider the matter aright, there is great sublimity in this internal, quiet, spirit-searching character of Christianity. It stands in analogy with the doings of God in the world of nature. *There* the most mighty and stupendous effects are produced in ways which man sees not and hears not; you mark the fresh beauty of spring, the rich and various splendor of summer, and the ripe fruits of autumn; but you see not the vast and secret agency which produced them; all is peaceful and quiet around you; there is no commotion, no noise; yet the great results never fail in their course. So it is with our Saviour's spiritual kingdom; as he himself declared, it cometh not with observation; yet it produces effects which shall last and grow

stronger, when every work of man, every monument of his pride or power, shall have gone down to dust and ashes. When we consider that this inward, silent power of the Gospel, which man sees not, is working in the depths of the soul to bring forth fruit for eternity; when we think of the noiseless cause and the mighty results, we cannot measure the moral grandeur which bursts upon our view. Men have wondered at the great things around them, and have gazed with admiration on the stars of heaven; but what is their sublimity compared with the spiritual sublimity of the kingdom of God within the human soul? It is here, I think, that we discern the peculiar glory, the most lovely feature of the Christian system. In this moral purpose of the Gospel, I see the brightest and deepest stamp of its true divinity, the surest token that it is one of the forms of instruction which came from the Everlasting Fountain of truth, the most impressive evidence that it is the manifestation of mercy and grace from a better world.

In stating this view of my subject, I hope it will be sufficiently evident, that I do not speak of that cheap and superficial thing sometimes called moral influence, which reaches not the springs of thought and action, and which grows and dies on the soil of this world. The moral purpose ascribed to Christianity is far higher than this; it includes within its meaning all that religious improvement to which a disciple of Jesus Christ can aspire, the whole range of obedience to the laws of God, the purification of motives and principles under sanctifying influences, and above all the habit of acting on the warm and abiding conviction that we are here for a far higher and better end than can be here accomplished, and that if

we do not live for eternity, we mistake radically the purpose of our existence. It tells us, that our progress in Christianity coincides precisely with our progress in the duties we owe to God and man; that the presence of God in the soul is manifested solely by the presence of those qualities which resemble his own moral attributes; that whatever degree of goodness any human being possesses, in that degree does God dwell with him, and no further; that whatever portion of moral purity is in the heart, that portion of the divine influence is there, and no more; that in the great work of becoming a true disciple of Jesus, no exertion of self-command, no benevolent effort for others, no aspiration of piety, lifting the soul towards God, is lost; but that each of these is a part of vital religion, a production of some portion of that effect at which Christianity singly and solely aims. When we say, that the grand object of the Gospel is to operate on the moral nature of man, we say for it, I conceive, that which is the highest praise, far higher than can be bestowed by all the rhapsodical declamation of fearful denunciation in the world. We state an object which was worthy of all that cost of suffering and sacrifice by which Christianity was established among men, an object as much superior to all others as heaven is to earth, as much more lasting as eternity is than time, as much more beautiful and glorious as the bright morning-star is than the gem which glitters in the dust beneath our feet.

From the view which has now been taken of the character of the Christian system, some consequences follow which ought to be carefully observed.

1. It presents the encouraging fact, that the amount of

real religion in the community is not to be measured by any of the standards which mark the diversities of theological opinion. If the true kingdom of God be within, and within only, it must in its nature depend more on the culture of the heart, than on the form of speculative faith. We are apt to leave out of view the difference between religious opinions, and the religious feeling, or sentiment, and to forget that while the former are thrown into every possible variety of shape, the latter may be about the same in all. It is consoling to reflect, that those, in whom the moral purpose of the Gospel is accomplished, are in the nature of the case far more numerous than those who hold what we should deem a correct creed; that the internal power of Christianity is known to many who are ranked under opposite banners as to faith. The practical followers of the Saviour are scattered far and wide among those who bear his name; and the lines, by which we trace them, strike across all the lines that mark the boundaries of the various divisions of Christendom. I would not be understood to say, that there is no connexion between doctrine and practice, for that would be to state a proposition which the history of man in every other department, as well as in religion, would contradict. But I believe it will be found that the doctrines which really do influence practice, are almost always those in which Christians are essentially agreed, when they lay aside the technical phraseology of their sect, and understand one another. At least, I think this is the case, when there is no agitating excitement to turn the thoughts and feelings of men in another direction; for it is one of the evil effects of keen disputation and party warfare, that men are excited

to realize and carry out in practice the bad consequences of doctrines, which otherwise would have slept inoperative and harmless in their minds. When the storm is abroad, they wrap around them more and more closely the mantle of the sect, and declare, — what they before never thought of maintaining, — that it is the only Christian garment. They feel in some sort compelled to be and to do what their creed requires them to be and to do; and the silent influences, which had before effectually counteracted this tendency, wither under the grasp of the stern power that has now taken possession of their minds. But with the exception of the interruptions occasioned by the out-breakings of the fierce spirit of party, I believe that the doctrines which do in fact influence habitually and extensively, are not the doctrines that constitute the land-marks of divisions among Christians. There are, to be sure, at all times, wayward and perverse minds, who shrink from no consequences, however terrific, that seem to them to flow from their faith. But with the great mass of the Christian community it is not so; for they are better than their bad creeds, and worse than their good creeds. If it be objected, that this implies a strange want of consistency, I would reply, that surely the inconsistency of man is no new discovery. And in the present case we have reason to be thankful, that, even at the cost of consistency, there is a redeeming spirit in the common sense and good feelings of mankind, which so often paralyses the power of doctrines, that, if unchecked, would naturally produce the worst effects, — that points of faith, when they stand in books adjusted to a system, are far from being the same things as when they exist in the actual apprehensions of men,

and that certain opinions and certain minds come together by a sort of inexplicable attraction, without affecting the essential constituents of the kingdom of God in the soul. A striking illustration of the fact, that Christians after all occupy common ground with regard to the interior moral power of religion, is furnished by those seasons of calamity and trial, which make them forget their speculative differences. At such times, they find that the distinctions, by which they have been known from each other, are not what they want: in the hour of need they want those plain truths and consoling hopes, which form the practical fellowship of hearts that had before been estranged from one another. It is recorded, that when the city of London, in the year 1665, was visited with the plague, which raged like the wild-fire of destruction through that immense mass of population, as soon as the hope of checking its ravages gave way to the anguish of despair, when the pestilence was at the most awful height, the people rushed in one indiscriminate multitude into the temples of God. Wherever a sanctuary offered itself, wherever a church was to be found, no matter of what donomination, there they poured out their souls to Him, of whom they besought help; the distinctions of religious faith were forgotten while their hearts were melted down together in humility and prayer before the altar of God. But no sooner did the scourge begin to be withdrawn, no sooner did its fury cease, than they remembered and returned to their distinguishing creeds, and one of the first evidences of the diminution of the pestilence was the separating into their old religious parties. There is nothing like a time of general trial and suffering, to unmask the deceptions we put upon

ourselves with regard to this subject, — and to show us that where the words of Jesus, which are spirit and life, are received at all, they find nearly the same lodgment in all hearts.

2. This subject furnishes us with the true measure, by which to estimate Christian improvement. If our religion be an interior principle of moral life, then the great question is, has it established and strengthened its kingdom within? If it be a strong and peaceful spirit of internal purity, then the increase of its dominion over us must be the increase of good motives, good affections, and good purposes. It presents itself to us in the form of a living principle, which, like a secret and holy fire, spreads gradually till it warms and enlightens the whole moral nature. It is common to say, we must all experience a change, if we would become true Christians. And so we must, if the expression be understood aright. I should rather say, we must experience a great many changes, for this plain reason, that, if we are true Christians, we must and shall be always improving. If the kingdom of God be really within us, it is built up silently and by degrees. This is in conformity, not only with all that we know of man's nature, as a moral being, but with all the declarations of our Saviour respecting the character of his Gospel. Conversion, if it be genuine, if it be worth having, is the business of the whole life; for, what does it imply? It implies turning from what is bad to what is good. Now if the Christian be faithful to his Master, and to his privileges, he will always be turning from what is bad to what is good; and therefore his conversion will not terminate till it has conducted him to the rest that remaineth for the people of God. Of many

Christians it may truly be said, that they cannot remember the time when the principle of true religion was not within them. They can see that its foundation has settled deeper and its power grown stronger, from time to time, in their hearts; but its beginnings were there even in the earliest dawn of childhood, and its progress has been sure and constant, though never violent or showy. And there is no form, in which religion so happily reveals its power to the soul, as in this.

If, then, we wish to know whether we have begun the Christian course, whether we have made progress in the Christian life, we must not look around us for tokens and signs to hang out before the world; we must not cry — "lo here! or, lo there!" — we must not think much of a sudden flush of the shame of guilt, or of the fervor of a few days or hours of agitated feelings or alarming apprehensions; no, we must look within and see whether the interior principle of the Saviour's kingdom is there. If, with the solemn and abiding conviction, that the eye of God is upon us while we are taking this inward account, we can find, by the trust-worthy report of conscience, that the spirit of Christianity has an increasing power over our thoughts, motives, and feelings, — that our desires, purposes and wishes are growing more chastened and consecrated under its influence, — that our selfishness is rooted out, our pride broken down, our devotion warmed, and our sense of duty quickened by having learned of him, who was meek and lowly in heart, — that our passions have been taught to bow down submissively before his religion, and to yield obedience to him, as the stormy waters once sunk into silence at his bidding, — in short, that there has been in our characters a

growth of the virtues and graces, which are the appropriate fruit of the Gospel, — then it is no matter whether our advancement in the spiritual life be recorded on the register of any sect or not; it is enough for us that the kingdom of God is within, and that we cease not to strive that it may abide and grow stronger there. To judge of religious improvement by the ebb and flow of feelings and impressions is as unreasonable and delusive, as to form an estimate of the climate of a country by the winds or the face of the sky, which may chance to prevail as we pass through some portion of it. We must become acquainted with the general state of the atmosphere and the usual and average health of the inhabitants, before we can make up a just opinion. And so we must consider what is the moral health of the soul, what the general spirit with which it is animated, before we can come to any safe conclusion as to the reality and strength of the principle of spiritual improvement.

3. We may gather from this subject the principles on which we are to judge of the worth of outward manifestations of every sort, as connected with the Christian character. That there is a strong tendency to ascribe an exaggerated value to these is sufficiently evident. There is a pacific and internal religion, and there is a religion of disputation and display; it is this latter kind which men are most disposed to wonder after and be enamoured with, because it has a business-like appearance, works for striking effect, and serves to carry off the superfluous activity of stirring minds in outward excitements, and in the bustle of management. Doubtless there is an opposite extreme; and no one would wish to see the Christian community resemble a stagnant pool,

lest it should become mantled over with collections of impurity, alike unsightly to the eye and pernicious to the health. Of this, however, there is little, if any, danger; and I believe if there be any thing which requires great delicacy and cautious wisdom, it is the management of external stimulants in religion. They are exceedingly apt to degenerate into systematic scenery and parade — to create a sort of spiritual rivalry, in which men are exhorted not to be outdone by others in the work of excitement, to call out the action of strife against strife, and of contrivance against contrivance. Combinations are formed, on all hands, to carry on great plans connected with what are conceived to be the interests of religion at home and abroad. Money and time are prodigally expended, that the community may be kept in a state of continual fermentation. Arrangements are made, the operation of which is to reach far and wide; and it is thought necessary that every thing should be done on the largest scale of the most public and showy exertion. Devices for swelling the influence and increasing the number of a party are pushed to the utmost. The interest taken in ostentatious and expensive plans is pronounced to be the test of true zeal. The cry of "lo here! and lo there!" is heard from all sides; and the progress of the kingdom of God is considered only as a matter of observation. Religion manifests itself in sounding and showy forms, as if to operate on the individual heart were too humble a task for it to perform; and men delight to speak of it in the martial style, in all the strong and violent figures of military language.

It seems to have been the destiny of the Christian world, at least of many parts of it, to be subject almost

periodically to this diseased state of feeling, which, after having wearied and afflicted the community for a while, at length subsides, and leaves an interval, during which men breathe from the toil of the strong pressure, until some train of circumstances calls forth a renewal of it, and the same scene is acted over again. Many of the modes of excitement, several of the points of dispute at the present day, as well as of the arguments by which they are supported or refuted, and not a few of the accusations and reproaches, which are now advanced and repelled with so much earnestness, are just the same that agitated our community when the celebrated George Whitfield shook society with the strong power of an eloquence, the striking effects of which are now matter of curious tradition. The praises of the age have been so often and so loudly repeated, that we are apt to forget, that after all, men, taken in the mass, are not so very different in the nineteenth century from what they ever were before. Whatever may be the good effects claimed for these periods of external striving and operation in religion, yet they are certainly liable to abuses, which should call into exercise the utmost watchfulness. The fertility of the soil in the neighborhood of volcanic mountains is said to be increased by their eruptions; yet, even if this be true, every one would think it wise to guard most vigilantly against the danger and desolation that belong to the price at which the benefit is thus dearly purchased.

The times, of which I have spoken, are adapted to give an ascendency to coarse and violent men; to put a power for evil into hands which otherwise could never have gained any power; to stimulate the appetite that

craves whatever acts strongly on the feelings without enlightening the understanding, so that, whatever may be the boast of improvement, progress in light and truth is in fact checked; to make us forget that there is a wide and important difference between the discussion of great subjects by calm and inquisitive minds and the bitterness of general and popular contention about titles of doctrines or places of worship, between the love of truth, as it dwells apart in the mind of its sincere votary, and the heedless passion for conflict about religious opinions, occupying nearly the same place among the mass of society which is sometimes filled by blind political excitement. With all this external agitation, much sincere piety, I grant, may be mingled. But does all this look like the description our Saviour gives of his religion, when he tells us that his words are spirit and life? Does all this harmonize with the beautiful impression we gather from the instructions of him "who spake as man never spake?" Are we not rather constrained to say with Paley, on another occasion, "how different from the calmness, the sobriety, the good sense, and I may add the strength and authority of our Lord's discourses."

Such is the character of Christianity as an internal and purely spiritual principle, and such are some of the reflections which the subject suggests.

It will be manifest, I think, Christian friends, that here is the most important and affecting aspect in which our religion can be viewed. Considered in this character, it addresses itself, in all its power and all its tenderness, directly to the moral nature of man; it seems to say to us, in the strong and vivid language of an old

writer: "Retire much into yourselves, and there demand of your souls that they declare their quality and condition to you. They are able to make you an answer; and therefore, bid them tell you what is their parentage and kindred, of what house they are descended, what is their nature, their portion, their inheritance; and do not cease till you have received satisfaction. Ask them if they are not the daughters of God, sisters to angels, images of divinity? Hearken if they will not tell you that they are spirits of a vast understanding, purer than light, swifter than the lightning, whose portion and dowry is immortality, whose place is the universe, whose capacity is a picture of infinity, who are born to be heirs of the other world, to have the honor of being kings, and to reign with God forever." When Christianity is thus regarded with reference to its internal object and character, we see that justly is it called in Scripture "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God," — glorious in that it has met and satisfied the great moral wants of man, glorious in the light which it sheds on eternity, glorious in the consolation it bestows on the children of sorrow, and in the purity it imparts both to the affections which belong to earth and to those which cleave to immortality. It thus developes most beautifully its aptitude to call forth and combine with all that is excellent and spiritual in man; and there is not a noble or generous thought, not a pure or holy desire, not a sublime or far-reaching aspiration within us, that is not attracted, as if for light and warmth, to the internal kingdom where Christianity sits enthroned in the heart.

This religion was at the first ushered in as the herald of peace on earth, and good will to men; and wherever

the weary and heavy laden are to be relieved, wherever the sorrowful are to be comforted, the ignorant to be enlightened, or the wanderer from truth and duty to be guided aright ; wherever there is a sinner's heart touched with penitence, a poor prodigal anxious to return to his father's house, there Christianity appears, and shall appear, a minister of light and joy, man's best friend in life and his strong stay in death, his guide on earth, his everlasting hope — surrounding him with encouragement and defence, with support and solace, and cherishing with all its holy influence that divine life, that kingdom within, which takes hold on eternity, and bears in its nature the germ of an angel's purity and an angel's happiness.

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THE

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OF

RETRIBUTION.

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THE

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It is the uniform doctrine of the new Testament, established by the declarations of him, whose words shall never pass away, and inculcated by the Apostles of his religion, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord; that our condition in the world beyond the grave depends upon our character and conduct in this. They that have done good, says Jesus, shall come forth to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation. We shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, says St. Paul, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, says the Apocalypse, and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of those things, which were written in the books, according to their works. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire; or consigned to the punishment which he deserved. I

might multiply passages teaching and enforcing the same great truth of an awful retribution in the future world for the deeds which are performed in this, to an indefinite extent. I might show, too, that all the happiness which is promised by Christ and his apostles, is promised on conditions, which man must perform in order to secure it, or in other words, to those who possess certain characters — those who, in the language of scripture, "follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man can see the Lord." I would as soon undertake to prove from the Scriptures that there is no God, as to prove from the same writings, that there is no punishment beyond the grave for those who die in their sins.

God has communicated to us his desire that none should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But he has communicated to us his determination to bestow happiness only through the medium of holiness. He has made us free agents, capable of abusing our powers, capable of bringing misery upon ourselves, as well as happiness. It is evidently the plan of the Deity, as represented in the Scriptures, not to force the volitions of his creatures. He is represented as setting before us the path of holiness and the path of wickedness, the way of life and the way of death, the crown of glory and the abyss of ruin, and as leaving us at liberty to choose the one or the other. However much he desires it, he will not make us happy against our will. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." What is the consequence of his having no pleasure in the death of the wicked? Is it, that the wicked will not die, or suffer punishment? Is it, that he will directly inter-

fere to prevent the consequences of the course, which the sinner chooses? Oh, no. The only consequence is, that God intreats the sinner to return, and by the exercise of his own freewill to avoid the evil consequences of a sinful course. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he should turn from his ways and live. Turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die."

Having given the children of men a rational nature, moral powers, and freedom of will, he deals with them according to that nature. He places before them motives, reasons, persuasions, such as are suited to influence rational and free agents. He treats them neither as machines nor as brutes. He will not force any of his creatures to be good. He will not compel them to go in the right way. This in fact would be a contradiction. He can only invite them to it, and show them whither the way of holiness leads; and whither the way of wickedness leads. He places the fountain of life, and the cup of indignation before them, and allows them to drink which they please. No one will go to the world of woe, who does not choose to go thither, and no one will fail of heaven, who strives to enter the straight gate that leads to it. If we choose holiness, heaven is our portion. If we choose wickedness, misery is our portion. For without holiness, no man can see the Lord, but glory, honor, and immortality to every soul that doeth good.

But, perhaps some may ask, how then is eternal life a free gift, if it depends upon the choice, or the Christian character of those who receive it? The Scriptures represent eternal life as the gift of God through Jesus Christ

our Lord. If then eternal life is to be enjoyed by none but the good, and if goodness depend upon our choice, how is eternal life a free gift? I answer, a free gift is not necessarily an unconditional gift. Who does not know that benevolent men are in the habit of annexing to their most free and liberal donations some condition, without a compliance with which, the gift, however rich, free, and unmerited, would be null and void? Suppose a father should leave his child a large estate, on condition that he should devote a small part of it to some charitable object. If the son comply with the condition, he receives the legacy. If he do not comply, he forfeits it. The legacy is not the less a free and unmerited gift on the part of the father, because the son, in order to enjoy it, must fulfil the condition on which it is bestowed.

So is it with the salvation offered to man. It is a free salvation. God offers it to all freely, i. e. without any unwillingness, restriction, or reserve on his part, and yet he judged it most for the interest of the Universe, to offer it only upon the condition that man shall become holy; a condition with which all men have power to comply. They who comply with the condition which God requires, still receive a free, unmerited, unpurchased gift. There is therefore, no inconsistency in maintaining that salvation is the gift of God, and in ascribing it to free and infinite grace, although we actually obtain salvation only when by our own choice and our own exertions, assisted by that secret aid of the Spirit, which is promised to those that apply for it, we shall have become true Christians.

Perhaps there are some who may conceive it to be in-

consistent with the benevolence of God to suspend the happiness and misery of the future world upon the choice of such a weak, frail, short-sighted being as man. They may imagine it the part of infinite benevolence to make all happy, without regard to the perversity of their wills. If he is willing to save all, and has almighty power to accomplish what he is willing to do, why will he not save all mankind from the consequences of their perversity, folly, and guilt? Why does he suspend salvation upon the choice of such a poor, miserable, weak, and short-sighted creature as man. To this question I reply, that we may discover what God does by observation, and what he will do by his word; but to undertake to say why he does this, or why he does not do that, is a presumption of which this same weak, short-sighted creature ought not to be guilty. I acknowledge that many of the proceedings of the Most High baffle my comprehension. I should have supposed, reasoning from the perfections of the Deity, from his infinite wisdom, and his Almighty power, that there would have been no such thing as sin or misery in any part of the universe. I should have supposed that there would be nothing but peace and love and happiness in all his wide dominions. But how far this is from being the case on earth, we all know. We see then that it is unsafe to argue from the attributes of the Deity. We see that conclusions arrived at by such a mode of reasoning, are contradicted by facts.

Who can doubt that God wishes our happiness in this world? His infinite benevolence leads him to will our temporal felicity as much as he wills our eternal salvation. And yet we know that all are not happy in this world.

If we do but open our eyes, we shall see misery enough on every side. We see that happiness and misery in this world are to a great degree suspended upon the choice, the will of man. We see that many make themselves wretched by abusing their moral powers, by disobedience to the laws of God. The benevolence of the Deity does not interpose in this world to prevent men from making a wrong choice, and from suffering its consequences. If then God's being willing that all should be happy in this world does not necessarily make them happy, why should his being willing that all should be saved in the next world, necessarily save them? If the misery of men in this world, caused by their vices, is consistent with God's infinite benevolence, why is not the misery of men in the future world caused by their vices, consistent with the same infinite benevolence? From that part of God's government, which we see with our eyes and hear with our ears, we may reason concerning the unseen, and the future. What he does to some in this world, he may do to all who deserve it in the next. We conclude then that it is not more inconsistent with the benevolence of the Deity, that the consequences of men's sins should extend into the future world, than that they should extend to the close of their lives.

But perhaps it may be said, that the sins of men are sufficiently punished in the present life; that this world is a state of strict retribution, rather than a state of probation. That this is the case, to some extent, is acknowledged by all. Even in this world, the wicked stand on slippery places; it often happens that the ways of transgressors are hard, and that he only that walketh upright-

ly, walketh surely. But will any man in his senses maintain, that happiness and misery are always dealt out in the present life according to worth of character? Do offenders reap the just wages of their iniquities? Does it look like a state of retribution, when such men as Paul, and Peter, and John, and others of whom the world was not worthy, were stoned, sawn asunder, crucified, while their inhuman persecutors died peaceably in their beds? In this world the wicked often suffer less pain from conscience, the more they are hardened in iniquity. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, says St. Paul, we are of all men the most miserable. The idea that the present life is a state of complete retribution is contrary to the common sense of mankind in all ages of the world, which has led them to anticipate judgment beyond the grave. The annunciation in the Scriptures of a more exact and rigorous retribution than the present life presents, coincides with the unsophisticated sentiments of the human heart, solves difficulties in the divine administration, illustrates the impartiality of the Deity, and promotes the peace and virtue of the community.

I said that the doctrine of an exact retribution in the future life illustrates the impartiality of the Deity. I know that the system of future retribution is sometimes called partialism by those, who do not admit there will be any punishment beyond the grave. To me, however, it seems that no scheme ascribes more partiality to the Deity than that, which limits suffering to the present life. If there be no retribution beyond the grave, it would indeed be difficult to say, why the Deity should allow " the good man's

lot in life to be gall and bitterness of soul, while luxury in palaces lay straining her low thoughts to form unreal wants ;" why a Dives should be clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day, and a Lazarus lie at his gate full of sores, begging the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table, and obtaining more pity from the dogs than from the pampered pride of the rich man. Upon the scheme of future retribution, all these inequalities which are incident to a state of trial and probation will be set right in another world. But how they can be reconciled with the impartiality of the Deity on any other scheme than that of the present life's being a state of trial and probation, I am wholly unable to perceive.

But let us proceed to another topic. I am reminded that such declarations as, " Without holiness no man can see the Lord," are admitted in full by those, who hold that those who die in their sins enter into a state of happiness immediately after death. They hold that however wicked a man may be when he dies, yet in the article of death he is changed into a pure and holy being, fit to associate with the just made perfect. I am not able to say, whether they ascribe this instantaneous change from wickedness to purity, to the effect of death, or to the immediate agency of the Deity. I have never been able to perceive any ground for ascribing such a change to either cause; to the natural influence of death, or to the almighty power of God.

What is there in death that should have power to change the character of the soul? What is death? It is the dissolution of the organs and limbs, which the soul uses as instruments of its purposes. The dust returns

to the earth as it was, but the spirit returns to God who gave it, to give a strict account of all which it has done. The bodily organs, which are dissolved in dust, are entirely distinct from the soul; they have no will, nor conscience, nor affection, nor character. They are merely instruments of the soul. Why then should we suppose that the soul becomes pure, merely because it is separated from its material tenement, and because its bodily organs are destroyed? Parts of the body are often destroyed during life. The eye, the ear, the hands, the feet, often perish before death, and the peculiar organ of the mind, the brain, receives essential injury; but we do not find that moral character is altered or improved in consequence. It is true that some outward sins must cease with the decay of the organs on which they depend. Some outward sins abandon a man in his old age, without his abandoning them. But shall we say that a man's disposition is changed, because he is deprived of the power of doing wrong? Suppose that a thief should be condemned to the punishment of being deprived of his hands and his feet, so as to be forced to give up his business of pilfering. Would he by this process be made an honest man? And suppose that some of the animal appetites should cease on the dissolution of the body, yet how the peculiar vices of the soul, such as envy, malice, revenge, injustice, irreligion, should thus come to an end, or how the love of God or the love of man should be produced in the soul by the decay or dissolution of the body, I am wholly at a loss to conceive. Reason and scripture teach us, that reformation, change of character, righteousness, is brought about by the influence of mo-

tives, arguments, persuasions, addressed to the understanding and the heart. It usually is brought about gradually by the moral influences, direct and indirect, which proceed from God, acting upon the free souls of men. It is in its nature voluntary, and implies a faithful use of the means of improvement, and a habit of resisting temptation and enduring trials. It is contrary to the very nature of holiness, to suppose that it will belong to the soul at once by reason of its separation from the body, or that it will at once be infused into the soul by an immediate exertion of Almighty power.

The idea that the character is changed instantaneously in the article of death, "contradicts all our experience of the nature and laws of the mind. There is nothing more striking in the mind than the connexion of its successive states. Our present knowledge, thoughts, feelings, characters, are the results of former impressions, passions, and pursuits. We are this moment what the past has made us; and to suppose that, at death, the influences of our whole past course are to cease on our minds, and that a character is to spring up altogether at war with what has preceded it, is to suppose the most important law or principle of the mind to be violated, is to destroy all analogy between the present and future, and to substitute for experience the wildest dreams of fancy. In truth, such a sudden revolution in the character, as is here supposed, seems to destroy a man's identity. The individual thus transformed, can hardly seem to himself or to others the same being. It is equivalent to the creation of a new soul." * It is not

* Dr. Channing's Discourses, p. 221.

the resurrection of the man that died, but the creation of another person. So that this doctrine of universal salvation of all men at death, amounts after all to universal annihilation.

Another argument against this universal, instantaneous change of character in the article of death, or against the doctrine that there is no connexion between the character in this life and that which follows it, is, that it seems "to take away the use of the present state. Why are we placed in a state of discipline, exposed to temptation, encompassed with suffering, if, without discipline, and by a sovereign act of Omnipotence, we are all of us, be our present characters what they may, soon and suddenly to be made perfect in virtue, and perfect in happiness." *

There is, then, nothing in reason, experience, or observation, to induce us to believe that a change of character takes place at death. Nor is there any scripture testimony for it. The text in the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, which has sometimes been alleged for the purpose, has no relation to the subject. St. Paul there says, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed;" *i. e.* as the context plainly shows, changed from corruptible to incorruptible, from mortal to immortal persons. Sleep, in this passage, must mean the sleep of death, and not the sleep of sin; and of course a physical, not a moral change must be denoted, when he says, that "we shall all be changed." That this is the case is evident also from the considera-

* Channing.

tion, that the Apostle is speaking of those who already possessed the Christian character, and not of all mankind; as has been amply shown by Locke, and other distinguished commentators.

Let us then settle it in our minds, as a solemn truth, that an awful retribution in the future world awaits those who die in their sins.

> 'Tis not the whole of life to live,
> Nor all of death to die.

Let us deeply impress it upon our minds, that, as death leaves us, judgment will find us. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." This is a subject of vast importance. It is one upon which I would not speak lightly. I would speak as remembering that I too shall soon stand at the tribunal of my Judge. Far be it from me to wish to inspire in your minds anything but a rational, a manly fear, a prudent regard to the consequences of your actions. I would have you regard the consequences of character and conduct in their whole extent. If these consequences extend beyond the grave, it was mercy in God to inform us of it. It is wisdom in man to be governed by the information. None of the vain hopes which we may entertain will retard the day of retribution a single moment. Come it will, and with the greater weight the less it is expected. It will be an awful day for those who die in their sins; a day when they will suffer much more for them than they have ever suffered here. All the emblems and representations of scripture, however figurative they may be, point to this certain truth. What will be the exact nature and dura-

tion of the retribution of the future world, I do not profess to know. To me the scriptures give little or no light on these points. Plausible arguments, drawn from the nature of punishment and from the attributes of the Deity, have been adduced to prove, that the penalties of the future world will be disciplinary, and terminate in the reformation and happiness of the sufferer. But these arguments yield no ground of certain faith that the soul, which has abused the abundant means of improvement in this world, will not continue to abuse them indefinitely, though we should entertain the hope that God in his infinite mercy would afford them. Others have brought forward scriptural arguments of considerable weight to show that the punishment of the wicked will terminate in the extinction of their being; while the popular opinion has been, that this punishment will be prolonged, in the strictest sense, to eternity. From a careful consideration of the general scripture usage of the words having relation to the subject, I cannot find decisive authority in the sacred volume for either of these views. To me it appears the design of revelation to leave the exact nature and duration of future punishment involved in obscurity. I am contented to leave the subject, where the Scriptures appear to me to leave it, viz. that the righteous will be rewarded and the wicked punished in the future world, according to their deeds; that this punishment will be great in degree and long in duration, but neither greater in degree nor longer in duration than is consistent with perfect justice, wisdom and mercy. Let it be our resolution to fear and avoid, rather than to explain and define, the mysterious retribu-

tions of sin in the future world. Let us live as those who must give an account of themselves to God for the things done in the body. Let us be more anxious to escape from our sins, than to escape with them. "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn to the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon."

1st Series. No. 107.

THE

ELEVENTH REPORT

OF THE AMERICAN

UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

WITH THE

PROCEEDINGS

OF

THE ANNUAL MEETING,

MAY 24, 1836.

BOSTON:

LEONARD C. BOWLES, 147 WASHINGTON STREET.

JUNE, 1836.

Price 6 *Cents.*

I. R. BUTTS, PRINTER, SCHOOL ST.

ELEVENTH ANNIVERSARY.

The American Unitarian Association celebrated its eleventh anniversary on the evening of Tuesday, May 24, 1836. The members met for the transaction of business at half past six o'clock, in the Berry-street Vestry, Rev. Dr. Bancroft, the President, in the chair.

The records of the last annual meeting were read. The Treasurer then presented the following Statement of Receipts and Expenditures, which was accepted.

Boston, May 24, 1836.

To the Executive Committee of the American Unitarian Association.

Gentlemen, — Herewith you have my account as Treasurer of the Association, and a condensed statement

of the Receipts and Expenditures for the past year, by which you will perceive that the receipts have considerably exceeded those of the previous year, and the balance now on hand is $2344,57.

STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES OF THE AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION, FROM MAY 26, 1835, TO MAY 24, 1836.

RECEIPTS.

Balance in the Treasury, May 26, 1835,		1176,05
From Annual Subscribers, - - -	88,00	
" 19 Life Members, - - -	588,87	
" Auxiliary Societies, - -	1612,95	
" Donations, - - - -	21,00	
" Sales of Tracts, - - -	350,54	
" Congregational Church at Mobile,	400,00	
" the Treasurer, interest - -	92,50	
		3153,86
		$4329,91

EXPENDITURES.

Paid for printing and binding Tracts,	467,00
" bill of paper for Tracts, - -	680,00

Paid Charles Bowen, for services as General Agent, to Aug. 5, 1835, -	58,33	
" Leonard C. Bowles, for services as General Agent, to May 1, 1836,	150,00	
" Rev. George W. Hosmer, missionary services in Southern and Western States, and for supply of his pulpit at Northfield, during his absence,	554,28	
" incidental expenses, - - -	75,73	
		1985,34
Balance,		$2344,57

A separate account of the Fund for the General Agency of the Association, is also submitted; the collections for which, the past year, have amounted to $2408,37: and there has been paid for salary of the Agent, and incidental expenses, $1834,07; leaving a balance of receipts beyond expenditures, for the last year, of $574,30, — which, added to the balance on hand May, 1835, and interest on the amount, leaves a balance in the treasury this day of $9550,09.

I am gentlemen,

Respectfully yours,

HENRY RICE.

Boston, May 28, 1836. The undersigned have examined the accounts of Henry Rice, Esq., Treasurer of the American Unitarian Association, and find the same to be correct; the balance on hand, for purposes exclusive of the General Agency, being twentythree hundred and fortyfour dollars and fiftyseven cents, — and that for the support of the Agency Department, nine thousand five hundred and fifty dollars and nine cents; — leaving on hand, to the credit of the Association, at this date, the sum of eleven thousand eight hundred and ninetyfour dollars and sixtysix cents.

Signed, Elijah Cobb, Francis Alger, } *Auditors.*

The Association then proceeded to the choice of Officers for the ensuing year. The Rev. Dr. Bancroft was re-elected President, but declined accepting the office. He expressed a deep interest in the objects of the Association, but was, he said, admonished by the growing infirmities of age, of the duty of declining such a responsibility.

The Association, after expressing their thanks for his long, faithful, and very acceptable services, made choice of the following Officers: —

OFFICERS

OF THE

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

1836 — 37.

PRESIDENT.

Rev. William E. Channing, D. D., of Boston, Mass.

VICE PRESIDENTS.

Hon. Joseph Story, Mass.
" Joseph Lyman, "
" William Sullivan, "
" Charles H. Atherton, N. H.
" Stephen Longfellow, Me.
Henry Wheaton, Esq. N. Y.
James Taylor, Esq. Penn.
Henry Payson, Esq. Md.
Hon. William Cranch, D. C.
Martin L. Hurlburt, Esq. Penn.
Hon. Samuel S. Wilde, Mass.
" Samuel Hoar, Jr.
Timothy Flint, Esq. N. Y.
Hon. Lemuel H. Arnold, R. I.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

Rev. Henry Ware, Jr. D. D.
" George Ripley.
" Samuel K. Lothrop,
} *Directors.*

Rev. Charles Briggs, *General Secretary.*
" Samuel Barrett, *Assistant Secretary.*
Henry Rice, Esq. *Treasurer.*

ELEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

The Executive Committee, in looking back upon the success which has attended their labors during the past year, find much cause for congratulation and devout acknowledgment. A kind Providence has, indeed, blessed their efforts to disseminate Christian truth, and advance the interests of practical religion. And they doubt not but the members of the Association will find in the Report, which is now presented, new reasons for gratitude to heaven, and new inducements to benevolent and Christian effort.

Eleven years have now elapsed since the formation of this Association. It was designed as a bond of union and sympathy among Christians of our denomination; and, in the words of its Constitution, "to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity throughout the country." And it has more than answered the expectations of its founders. It has been instrumental in making our views of religion more known, respected, and valued. It has sent the light, the consolations, and hopes of religion into the distant, and comparatively benighted parts of our land. It has done much to check the progress of Infidelity, to dispel the darkness of error and sin, and build up the Redeemer's

kingdom in the hearts of men. As its principles and operations have become more known, its friends and supporters have been multiplied; and it has, during the past year, received a large share of public favor. It is perceived that we are actuated by the purest and the best of motives; that our great purpose is, not to promote the interests of a party, but of religion; to supply the spiritual wants of the country; to disseminate the truth, that men may be sanctified by the truth.

Much of the attention of the Committee has been directed to the Tract department. This they have always regarded as a very important, but somewhat difficult part of their labors. As a large proportion of our denomination are not much interested in controversial subjects, it appeared to us that the cause of religion would be best promoted by issuing publications mostly of a practical character. Occasionally, however, we have published tracts illustrative of our views of Christian truth. Such, although not so much needed in New-England, are very useful in distant places, where our doctrines are but little known, and are misrepresented; and they who believe in them are denied Christian privileges, and not unfrequently the Christian name. As these publications have a wide circulation, it is important, in preparing them, that regard should be had to the whole country. And the religious condition and wants of one part being widely different from that of another, it follows that a Tract, well suited to a particular section of country, would by no means be so well adapted to some other parts. Here practical Tracts are in the greatest demand; and there doctrinal ones are most eagerly sought. We hope, therefore, that this will be

duly considered by those who read them; and that they may be profitable to all, — may contribute to their growth in grace, and enable them, too, to understand the grounds of their faith, and be ready "to give a reason of the hope that is in them."

About the usual number of Tracts have been published during the past year. But the demand for them having greatly increased, more have probably been circulated than in any year since the establishment of the Association. The Secretary has received urgent requests for them from all parts of the United States; and has learned from correspondents, and from actual observation, that they have done much for the cause of truth, of virtue, and religion. As they contain correct explanations of the doctrines of revelation, and enforce with great power, the practical duties of Christianity; as they are useful for family reading, and are adapted to improve the heart and the life; to diffuse abroad the charitable and blessed spirit of our Master, and make men wise unto salvation, the Committee are desirous they should be circulated in every community, and read by every individual of our denomination. And with the view of increasing their circulation and usefulness, they intend to publish some which shall be peculiarly plain, simple, and adapted to the humblest capacity.

The Book and Pamphlet Society has in a great measure supplied its depository with selections of our tracts. Having recently received new proofs of public favor and interest, it has enlarged its operations, and is extending its usefulness. There is an increasing demand for its publications; and its members are entitled to great credit for thus liberally sending abroad the light

of divine truth, the hopes of religion, and the means of salvation.

The Ministry to the Poor in this city is an object of deep interest with the Committee. It is a most philanthropic and truly Christian undertaking. Thus to instruct, to comfort, and elevate the ignorant, the suffering, and degraded of our race, — to visit the widow and fatherless in poverty and affliction, — to wipe away the tear of sorrow, and be the friend of the friendless, — to pour the light of heavenly truth into the dark abodes of sin and wretchedness, — and make those, who have no proper sense of character, to respect themselves, and feel that they have souls, immortal souls, to be saved or lost; — in fine, to bring those under Christian influences who, by their situation, are in a great measure denied the common blessings and privileges of the Gospel, and be instrumental in guiding them to happiness and heaven, — is a work which angels would delight to look upon, and which God will approve and bless. And we are persuaded there is no work, in which Christians of our denomination can engage, that will be productive of such good fruits as this, and similar undertakings; that will exert such a spiritual influence upon their hearts and lives, and make them, indeed, the followers of him, who is our pattern and guide, and who "went about doing good." We are happy to state, that a commodious chapel has recently been erected for one of the Ministers at large, and that nearly the requisite funds for another similar chapel, have been raised by subscription.

The formation of Auxiliary Associations has been another object of attention with the Committee. These Associations are an effectual means of promoting christian

knowledge, and exciting a deeper interest in religion. They serve as cords of sympathy, and bonds of union; and we need more of such, to strengthen each others hands and encourage each others hearts, and excite us to every good work. We regard them, too, as a means of spiritual growth and prosperity, and earnestly recommend that they should be established in all the societies of our denomination.

Much of the Secretary's time has been devoted to this object. He has visited as many places as he could, consistently with his other engagements, for the purpose of forming such Associations, and strengthening those already established. An important object in these visits was to make known the religious wants of the country, and awaken a missionary spirit. And he found that our societies needed only to know these wants, in order to feel a disposition to supply them. In several places liberal contributions were made to the Association. An individual, in the Western part of the state, subscribed fifty dollars a year for ten years.

The number of Auxiliaries formed, during the year, is 16. The number added to the list of life members is 40; making in all about 260. Of these, 73 are clergymen, and were made life members by the ladies of their respective societies. Many more Associations would have been formed, were it not that a considerable portion of the year was devoted by the Secretary to addressing established Auxiliaries, and preaching to new societies. The number of places which he visited, was about fifty. As Associations of this kind, in order that an interest may be kept up in them, need occasional excitement, it is hoped that clergymen will deliver dis-

courses annually on the subject; urging upon their congregations the importance of a true missionary spirit; the duty of doing something beyond their own communities for the support of religious institutions, for the cause of truth, virtue and holiness; that the moral wants of those of our faith in other and less favored parts of the country may be supplied; and that we, in common with other denominations, may do our part in the great and glorious work of enlightening and saving mankind.

It has been an important object with the Committee to encourage and strengthen such new societies as give promise of growth, and appear to require but temporary assistance. The members of these societies, being unable to support public worship but a part of the time, are deprived of many religious privileges which are most dear to them. They feel deeply the importance of the institutions of religion to themselves, their families, and the rising generation; and make great efforts and sacrifices to have a stated ministry; but find it impossible, without some aid. Many of them have to contend with other evils besides those arising from inability to support religious institutions, and demand our sympathy. They are persecuted; they have but little profitable intercourse with other Christians, and can hardly be said to enjoy the common rights and privileges of social life. This is particularly the case in the more distant parts of the country. We of New-England, surrounded as we are by religious blessings, are not aware of the trials and privations of such, and do not, therefore, feel for them as we otherwise should. And it has been among the objects of the Secretary to diffuse information on this subject, and to awaken an interest in their behalf, that

they may receive assistance, till they can, of themselves, support the institutions of religion permanently. We have afforded encouragement to several communities of this description. There is, we find, many a society, which, by a little temporary aid, would be cheered, strengthened, and animated to increased efforts in promoting the interests of religion; but which will otherwise dwindle away, and at length become extinct. And in our exertions to build up and strengthen such societies, we hope still more to have the co-operation and aid of those whom Providence has blessed with the means of supplying the spiritual wants of their brethren, and upon whom rests a solemn responsibility.

An extensive correspondence was commenced by the former Secretary, which, during the past year, has been continued and enlarged. This has occupied much time, but it has led to beneficial results. Many important facts have been thus collected, which will afford essential aid in the future plans and operations of the Association. The Committee have in this way obtained a more accurate knowledge of the state of our churches, the progress of divine truth, and the moral wants of the country. Our churches, they are happy to state, have generally been prospered, and are in a flourishing condition. New societies are rising up in almost every direction; and the truth as it is in Jesus is progressing throughout our country, and throughout the world.

But we find that the cause of religion still requires the efforts and sacrifices of its friends. Even in New-England there are communities where the blessings of the gospel are but imperfectly enjoyed. And in the more remote parts of the country the religious aspect of

things is far more unfavorable. There are many places in those parts where the church-going bell is never heard; where the institutions of religion are sadly disregarded, the Sabbath is wantonly profaned, and there is but little to remind one of a christian community.

It is stated on good authority that there are, in the Western States alone, "two millions of people connected with no religious denomination whatever." And who, we ask, should consult the spiritual welfare of this vast multitude, and strive to bring them under christian influences? Is it not obviously the duty of Christians of every denomination to do something for the religious improvement of that rapidly increasing and highly important part of our country; that all may hear the sound of the gospel of our Lord and Saviour, be guided by its precepts, governed by its motives, cheered by its light, consoled by its promises, and inspired by its precious, immortal hopes? Let this be the case, and we should have much to hope, where now we have much to fear. And the obligation which we as a denomination are under to engage in this work, is peculiarly strong. We have ascertained, by the visits and correspondence of the Secretary, that there are, in some parts of the country, many of our faith who are in a great measure cut off, by their situation, from the christian privileges they once enjoyed. They are not permitted to hold communion with other Christians; to set down at the table of our common Lord, to commemorate his sufferings and death; to have their children admitted to baptism, nor hardly permitted to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences. They have to hear their views of religion misrepresented and denounced from the pulpit; and they

feel that they cannot profitably attend public worship anywhere. How strong, then, is the obligation to extend to them our sympathy, and send them preachers!

The Committee have found, too, that in those parts of the country where our views are not much known, many have mistaken the errors and corruptions of Christianity for Christianity itself; and because they could not believe in the doctrines of revelation as they were exhibited around them, came to the gloomy and distressing conclusion that Christianity was not true, and renounced their best hopes. And we have repeated proofs that such, when our doctrines were explained to them, have rejoiced to find that our holy religion was altogether a different system from what they had supposed it to be. "This," say they, on hearing our views preached, "commends itself to our reason and understanding; and if this be Christianity, we most firmly believe in it." The Committee, therefore, lack words to express the weight of responsibility which rests upon our denomination. Here are spiritual wants which we, and we alone, can supply. Here is an extensive field of usefulness, in which no sect can labor so successfully as ours. Here are immortal beings, living without God and the believer's hope, who will not receive the offers of salvation as held out by others, but will receive them at our hands. Thousands, we are confident, will readily embrace religion, if rightly explained and presented to them, who will otherwise live in unbelief and die in sin.

The more we have known of the moral condition and religious wants of the country, the more desirous have we been that an increased number of pious and able young men should be brought into the ministry. There

is at this time a great want of preachers of our faith, in almost every State in the Union; and the cause of Christianity requires that we should immediately send laborers into the vineyard of our Lord. Truly the harvest is plenteous, but the laborers are few. The Secretary has, accordingly, in the various places he has visited, invited the attention of the clergy to this subject; and spoken of its importance to laymen, to parents, and to such young men as appeared worthy to enter upon the sacred profession; and in this way he has induced several to enter upon the study of theology. If double the number of young men, who are now educated for the ministry, were to come forward with an ardent desire to engage in this high and holy vocation, deeply imbued with the spirit of our Master, and willing to spend and be spent in his cause, there would be no lack of means for their education; and when they were prepared for the work, there would be places enough where they might labor with the hope of success. The South and the West present a broad field for such labors; and without them the cause of religion must suffer. There is no time to be lost. While we are sleeping the enemy is sowing tares; while we are delaying to raise up religious teachers, all this vast and fertile field, now prepared for the good seed, will be overrun with noxious weeds; with irreligion, infidelity and sin. Here is a solemn call of duty. We have not now enough preachers for the New-England churches. How then shall the wants of the South and of the great West be supplied?

Several benevolent individuals have felt the importance of this subject, and have, during the year, made liberal donations to the Divinity School at Cambridge. Two

gentlemen of this State gave one thousand dollars each, and an individual in a neighboring State offers two hundred dollars a year for the education of a young man in the School; and when he is educated, will defray his expenses as a missionary in the West. He expresses a wish that a fund may be raised for the support of ten students in theology at Cambridge; and proposes giving five thousand dollars for that object, provided other individuals will make up the requisite sum. He will likewise be responsible for two hundred dollars a year, for ten years, in aid of the funds of this Association, with a view of supporting a mission in the Western States. Providence, he says, has blessed him in temporal things, and he wishes to impart spiritual blessings to his fellow men. With a truly christian spirit he shrinks from all publicity in these benevolent deeds. His "alms" are "in secret," and "he who seeth in secret, will reward him openly."

The Committee, through the liberality of our societies, have been able, during the year, to carry on more extensively their missionary operations. They have made appropriations for the services of five missionaries; but, from sickness and other causes, three were unable to perform the duties assigned them. One of these was to have preached in Connecticut; one in Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana; and one in Michigan and Illinois. The two other gentlemen preached at the West and the South. Their services were duly appreciated in all the places they visited, and their labors were crowned with abundant success. From the good thus accomplished, we are convinced of the duty and importance of sending out more missionaries to those parts of the country.

Two clergymen, at the instance of the Secretary, have visited Virginia and North-Carolina, and preached at some of the most important places in those States; and one has travelled and preached as a missionary over a considerable part of Maine. In most of the cities and large towns throughout the United States, there are, it is believed, enough who entertain our views, or are favorably disposed towards them, to form societies; and all that is wanted for this object is to send well qualified preachers to those places.

This was verified in the establishment of several societies in the West, — at Buffalo, N. Y.; Meadville and Pittsburgh, Penn.; Cincinnati, Ohio; Louisville, Ky.; and St. Louis, Missouri. And the same may be said of most of our societies at the South. At Newport, R. I., after a short visit of the Secretary last Autumn, enough were called together to form a large and highly respectable society; and many now regularly attend its meetings, and are interested in religion, who before seldom attended public worship. It has a church nearly completed, and a Sabbath School in a flourishing condition; and it will do much to promote the cause of truth and piety. The result of a visit at Windsor, Vt. was similar. A deep interest is there manifested in our views of religion, and the prospect of a good society is flattering. At Mobile, Ala. after a visit of a few weeks by the Rev. Mr. Clarke and the Rev. Mr. Hosmer, who were sent out by the Association, a large society was organized, and funds, to the amount of ten or twelve thousand dollars, were raised for the erection of a church. The society is composed mostly of persons of the first respectability in the city; and the interests of religion there will be greatly promoted by its establishment.

The same might as speedily be done at New-Orleans, if the funds of the Association would admit of our sending a preacher to that place. Our missionaries preached there to crowded houses; and were informed that there are many of our faith in the city who are not accommodated with a place of worship. This may be seen from the fact that during the last year a hundred and fifty persons applied for pews in the Rev. Mr. Clapp's church, who could not be accommodated. Mr. Clapp says, that if a church were built there, the pews would at once be taken, and a large society gathered.

We might say much respecting the success of our views, the increase of our numbers, and the new societies which are rising up in various parts of the country. Information of this kind would no doubt be gratifying to all. But it would afford us much more satisfaction to speak of the spiritual growth of our denomination. Not that we are insensible to the value of divine truth; because faith exerts an influence upon practice; but we had rather, infinitely rather, be the means of turning one unhappy wanderer from the paths of evil, — of converting one sinner from the error of his way, and guiding a single individual to happiness and heaven, than to make a thousand proselytes to our faith.

We feel that, as a denomination, we have much to do. We are the guardians of a portion at least of God's holy truth. We are striving to make our religion known in its native beauty, simplicity and power, that it may be more extensively embraced, and produce more of its genuine fruits of righteousness; of love to God and love to man.

We are laboring to send the light of heavenly truth to

those who are enveloped in the darkness of this world; to provide the bread and waters of life for those whose souls are ready to perish for want of spiritual food. We have, it is true, been able to accomplish much, for which we render thanks to Him who has made us the instruments of good to our fellow-beings. But our work is not yet accomplished. No; our work is not done, till the great principles of the Reformation are better understood, and more regarded, — till religious persecution has ceased from its cruel and unholy work, and Christians, of every name and denomination, can enjoy equal rights and privileges, — till the professed followers of Jesus have learned more to love one another, and to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

Our work is not done till our sympathy reaches and blesses the thousands of our faith in the distant parts of our land, who are denied the privileges we enjoy; till the religious spirit of New-England pervades the vast multitudes beyond the mountains, and the moral condition of our country promises safety to its best institutions, its peace, and its freedom. No. Our work is not done, till the whole country is brought under christian influences; till the religion of the Prince of peace lays its restraining power upon those passions whence come wars and fightings; till the means of salvation are enjoyed in all the waste places of our land, and the blessings of the gospel are carried to the door of every log-house and cabin in the remotest wilds of the West, — that the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.

Mr. Pray rose and moved the acceptance of the Report. He did it, he said, with unmingled satisfaction, because it breathed the spirit of peace, — of religious independence, — and of true christian effort. He moved the acceptance of it, he said, in the first place, because it breathed the spirit of peace, harmony, and true christian love. But he did not mean to be understood, in saying this, that he was afraid of, or opposed to, controversy; on the contrary, he believed that controversy, when conducted in a true christian spirit, was the great instrument, under Providence, by which error was separated from truth; by which all revolutions and reformations, which were interesting to the human race, were brought about; and by which the human mind was trained to its greatest power, and carried forward to its highest state of improvement. The farmer, said he, does not expect to see his fields fruitful, nor his harvest a rich and abundant one, unless he first strikes his ploughshare deep into his field, and turns up its rich mold to the light and heat of the glorious sun. And it seemed to him that controversy was the ploughshare of the human mind, by which its capacities and susceptibilities were laid open to the more powerful and glorious light and warmth of the sun of truth. While, therefore, said he, we should entertain no unnecessary fear of controversy, we may and should rejoice that our season of tillage is past; that we can now sit down and enjoy the radiance of a summer's sun; cherish the plants which have sprung up under the influences of this early toil and culture; and gather in some of the fruits of our anticipated harvest.

But while this Report thus breathes a spirit of christian love, it was a source of equal satisfaction that it compromised no principle, but breathed also a spirit of religious independence. Peace can always be maintained without the sacrifice of any christian principle. Now, Unitarianism, as he understood it, was a religion of principle. Its great object was, by a sober and fearless inquiry, and by deep study, to ascertain what was christian truth. It discarded all creeds, all formularies, all human restraints; and taking the bible in one hand, and the heart, as it were, in the other, it sought to ascertain its true meaning; and having found it, to abide by it, to live by it, and to die by it. The true believer, with the Unitarian, was he who sought religiously, and with proper reverence, the whole will of God, and having obtained strong conviction of truth, strove to exemplify it in his whole life, so that when he came to its closing hour he might die in peace, hoping for the approbation of his Saviour and his God. This spirit, he hoped, would be cherished by all, and he rejoiced that it pervaded this Report.

And further, said he, it is a source of great satisfaction that the Report exhibits the true spirit of christian effort. He could not but express the joy he felt that the General Secretary, and other agents of the Association, have been so earnestly engaged during the past year in carrying the light of christian truth to those who were far away from us, beyond the reach of our constantly recurring opportunities for improvement. For some years he had entertained and expressed his belief that we were not doing enough in the great work of evangelizing the world. It is a subject of true rejoicing that the Association have entered into the work so fully the past year; and

that it had already accomplished so much. This missionary spirit, he said, was the spirit of primitive Christianity; and by engaging in this work we were but obeying the command of our Saviour, "Go ye out into all the world and preach the gospel." The satisfaction arising from this source was not therefore, nor mainly on account of the number of proselytes which our agents may redeem from the thraldom of infidelity and irreligion, and bring over to our faith, — as that it evinced that we ourselves were obtaining more and more of the true spirit of Christianity; and in this way may hope, through the Redeemer, to save ourselves, and be placed in the most favorable position to do something for the salvation of others. With these views, he moved the acceptance of the report.

Mr. Palfrey said, that he saw in the report much cause of gratitude for the success which had crowned the past exertions of the Association, and great encouragement to increased and persevering action. He saw in it, too, a proof of the efficacy of *association*. The principle of association was often spoken of as one of the characteristic features of the age; and it is regarded by many with jealousy. It is thought to interfere too much with individual action, and the free development of individual character. He had had a good deal of sympathy with these feelings. He thought there were dangers in carrying this principle too far, — dangers which should be carefully guarded against. But if it were an error to give an indiscriminate co-operation to all associations, which were formed for the promotion of good objects, it would be a no less error to keep aloof from all associa-

tions whatsoever. Some fixed principle was greatly needed, by which an individual may discriminate between such societies as he ought to join and those which he ought not. This was a very important and difficult subject, which he would not attempt fully to discuss. But it seemed to him that the sphere of association was *different* from that of private exertion; that associations took up good objects where individual effort is obliged to lay them down. He was disposed to assume as a principle, that when an object can be accomplished equally well for the community by individual effort as by a society, it is much better for the individuals concerned that it should be accomplished by the former means. He had not arrived at this principle by a process of induction. It seemed to him to commend itself at once to the reason. He had not looked round to see what societies would come within the limits it prescribed, but it appeared to him, on a cursory view, that this Association came clearly within those limits.

It proposes great and good ends, which could not be effected by individual effort. What are these ends? It proposes to offer a remedy for the prevailing spirit of infidelity. There are, in all parts of our country, men of strong and inquiring minds, who are rejecting Christianity altogether because they have identified it with the creeds which they have heard preached from infancy, and they say that if that is Christianity they cannot believe it. Multitudes were, from the same cause, in a state of indifference respecting the subject of religion, little better than absolute unbelief. The Association aimed to promote the influence of truth by exciting dis-

cussion, which is light. Many practical Christians, now of other denominations, might be led to inquire into our views and adopt them; and, believing as we do, that they are the purest and most powerful views of divine truth, we cannot but suppose that they would receive from them a new impulse in their spiritual progress. And, moreover, it is one incidental but very important effect of the promulgation of Unitarianism, that it softens the harsh features of surrounding creeds, and thus produces a nearer approximation to divine truth where it fails to convert. He did not think that this Association ought to propose to itself as an end, — even if it had in its hands means which rendered the accomplishment of that improbable, — to make the whole valley of the Mississippi, for example, Unitarian. He wished to see all the regular sects of Christians flourishing there, so long as they are capable of producing a truly religious influence. Different views of religious truth arise from natural differences in men's minds, and are adapted to these differences. But there is a class of minds, — he believed it to be a large and increasing one, — whose spiritual wants could be met only by our views of Christianity, who must be Unitarian Christians or no Christians at all; whose souls must have the food which our doctrines furnish, or they will starve. Ought they not to be informed that such food exists? Ought it not to be placed within their reach, so that they can take it if they choose? These are unquestionably good objects, — and how are they to be effected by individual effort? Imagine an individual in this city, deeply feeling the value of his religious opinions, grateful for them, and unwilling to enjoy them selfishly, — but desirous of doing something

to communicate them, — casting his eyes upon the great West; — how could he even begin to operate there? Endeavor to imagine how such an object could be effected, and you will find yourself necessarily conceiving something like a *society*, — a greater or less degree of *organization* for combined effort.

Mr. P. said he could bear his testimony, in a small way, to the usefulness of the Association. In the station he had occupied, he had received communications from different quarters, from individuals whom he had never seen, saying that they were anxiously inquiring for religious truth, and wished to know what Unitarianism, of which they had heard, was, and asking how they could be put in possession of a condensed view of our opinions. On such occasions he felt grateful that there was an institution like this, which had procured the writing and publication of able expositions and defences of the Unitarian doctrine, in a form convenient to be transported by mail, and which could furnish them for distribution to persons situated as he then was. He had disseminated many of them in this way through various and distant parts of the country, and hoped they had done good.

He did not see how the operation of this society interfered at all with individual action or opinion. A man might do all that he could personally to extend and strengthen the influences of true religion, by his daily life, example, conversation, influence in the sphere in which he immediately moves, and belong to an association like this, too. It is no shackle on private opinion. By subscribing to this Association a man does not express his assent to every particle of doctrine contained in its

Tracts. He considers them to contain substantial truth, to contain no hurtful error, or of course he would not subscribe. And the Tracts themselves are as free and independent expressions of individual minds as if they were not published under the auspices of a society. They have not been pared down to fit the dimensions of a previously established creed. The society has had nothing to do with them but to print and disseminate them.

It is said that this Association is sectarian. To be sure in a certain sense it is so, but in no other sense than that in which all efforts for the inculcation of religious truth are so. In this sense all our societies for the support of public worship are sectarian. Nay, the religious instruction which the parent, in the discharge of his most solemn parental duty, imparts to his child, is sectarian. Every man and body of men who undertake to teach their fellow men, can only communicate what they themselves believe to be true. The only circumstances that can fix the charge of sectarianism, in an odious sense, are bigotry and exclusiveness. There certainly is a right spirit of proselytism. Paul uttered it when he said, "I would to God that all who hear me this day were both almost and altogether such as I am." It is a generous, a noble spirit. He hoped that it would always characterize the operations of this Association.

Mr. Hosmer said; I am deeply interested in that portion of the report which relates to distant and western missions. I respond to the earnest expressions of the Secretary on that subject. I am ready to bear witness

to the great importance of missionary enterprise. For the last six months I have been a missionary of this Association. I have travelled through the Western and Southern States. The circuit through which I passed is more than four thousand miles in extent. Wherever I went I preached, as opportunity could be obtained; sometimes in churches, sometimes in school-houses, and sometimes on board steam-boats.

Sir, I have seen and heard much, but now that I am called upon to speak a few words, and I intend my words shall be very few, I am perplexed to decide with what I shall begin, or where I shall end. I will speak upon two points. The need of our efforts in the West and South, and the encouragements to greater efforts than we have yet made.

I was stationed three months at Louisville, Ky. It is one of the central points of a vast, active, growing community. I was afterwards located at Mobile, Ala., one of the outlets of the wide and fertile regions of the South-west; and as I stood at these interesting points, the humble observer of what was passing around me, and turned my thoughts round to the far-reaching limits running upon the Alleghanies on the East, and upon the Rocky Mountains on the West, I say, Sir, that my mind was greatly moved. I saw around me a world, a new world, rising into existence; yes, Sir, it has risen, — there is a world beyond the mountains. Its enterprise and prosperity are without a parallel in history. But, Sir, it is plain that great dangers hang over its career. The men of this new world may be swallowed up in the whirlpools of worldliness, or enervated and debased by luxury. They may forget the soul, and the future, and

God. Sir, there is one thing, and but one, which can save that rising community, and hold it safely in the days of its jeopardy, and that is pure Christianity. Let that be the corner stone, and the edifice will stand. A great work then is to be done, and what part shall we bear in the execution of it? Other denominations have entered the field. The Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Baptists, Episcopalians and Methodists are there; and, Sir, I rejoice that they are there. I doubt not that they have done good; they have begun the work. But I believe that these denominations will never be able to complete the work. Their doctrines and their modes are defective. The free mind of a youthful community will never respect the dogmas of Calvin, or the worn-out form of the Catholic church; it will have a religion which it can understand, or it will have none. Sir, our efforts are needed in the great work. Our views of christian truth are intelligible and rational. A friend of mine, a member of one of our societies in the West, a few months since, one Sabbath morning as he was going to meeting, met a plain, sensible looking man in the street, who inquired for a church. My friend invited him to go with him, and he did so. The subject of discourse was the duty and the privilege of free religious inquiry. The stranger listened with strict attention, and at the close of service told my friend, that he had always believed the doctrines which had been preached, but he had never before heard them declared from the pulpit. In the afternoon the stranger was again an attentive listener, and as he walked away from church he said to my friend, "Your minister is an uncommonly strange preacher; why, I could understand everything he said.

Generally I cannot do this when I attend church; parts of discourses seem intelligible; but when I try to put the whole together, I cannot tell what the preacher meant." This, Sir, is a plain, homely fact; yet I regard it as an important witness of the darkness and inconsistency which hang around the preaching of Calvinistic divines of the Episcopal and Presbyterian churches, with whom the stranger had been most acquainted.

Sir, our efforts are needed. In the body of Western and Southern society there are two classes, which especially deserve our regard. Those who have been educated under the liberal institutions which we are enjoying, and have left all and made their homes in a strange land, look to us for sympathy and help. They would worship God as in days past, and can we not aid them? Then there are those who at present have no deep regard for christianity, because they have never seen it presented in such a manner as to secure their intellectual assent, or moral approbation. Among this latter class may be found many intelligent and respectable individuals; and I doubt not, Sir, that many of this class, could they be made acquainted with what we believe to be pure Christianity, would gladly embrace it. Sir, I speak upon the authority of what I have known. While I was in the city of Louisville a gentleman of great respectability, who had become acquainted with our views of Christianity, and found great pleasure and support in them, told me that he believed Christianity had always been about his heart; but, said he, "I have seen so much difficulty in the management and government of churches, and such doctrines have been proposed for my assent, that my head had almost become an infidel."

This gentleman took me to visit a friend of his, whose head *had* become an infidel, and for the reasons above mentioned. Sir, we can do much to save such men from the chilling darkness of unbelief; and shall we not increase our efforts? I rejoice to learn from the Report that so much has been done the last year, and that means for doing still more in the good work are in readiness. I hope that more missionaries will go forth, and with the true spirit, — not to oppose the Catholics, nor the Presbyterians, — not so much to pull down error, as to build up truth.

And, Sir, may I suggest the encouragements which should cheer us on in missionary enterprise? First, look upon the map of our country, and it will be seen that, in the most important points of the Union, societies of our denomination have been established. These distant societies have all risen within a few years; and though they are not yet large, they are, with one or two exceptions, in a flourishing condition. They are mostly composed of young men, many of whom would not attend other churches, and not a few of whom, no doubt, we may count as saved from unbelief. Truly, Sir, we have encouragement to persevere; let these young and growing societies be encouraged and sustained, and each one of them will become a centre, around which a healthful influence will be exercised.

One of the objects of this Association has been to scatter light by the circulation of religious Tracts. Sir, there are facts to encourage us in this department of our labor. These Tracts are silent preachers, but they produce effects. A friend of mine was arrested in the course of Infidelity by one of your Tracts, which he accidentally

met with. That Tract held an important place in the train of means which had raised his soul from dark night to that heavenly day in which I trust he is now rejoicing. I could give many facts to illustrate the usefulness of Tracts, but I forbear to trespass upon your patience.

Sir, permit me to speak of one more encouragement to turn our efforts to the wide fields of the West and South. We have fellow workers there. The Christians and Reformers, or Campbellites, are substantially with us. They are devoted, self-sacrificing men, the advocates of the Divine Unity, rational doctrines, and religious liberty. In the main they are with us. But, Sir, they are prejudiced; our enemy hath sowed tares, and some of them have fallen into the minds of our liberal friends of the West. They have heard that our hearts are cold; that we have no reverence for the Scriptures, and little regard for truth: Sir, they are afraid of us; but let the right men go forth to labor with them, and they will soon perceive that they have been misinformed, and will welcome us as brethren.

Sir, our efforts are needed, and we have encouragements to use all our strength. A wide field is open. The harvest is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth laborers into his vineyard.

Mr. Hosmer having concluded, Mr. Thompson, of Salem, addressed the meeting nearly as follows:

Mr. President, — Having listened with deep interest to the stirring statements and eloquent remarks of my friend and brother, who has just resumed his seat, I would, with your leave, submit a Resolution which, I trust, will be in

accordance with the spirit which he has awakened. The Resolution is in these words:

"*Resolved*, That the condition of the Western States is such as to open a good field for the dissemination of Unitarian Christianity, and that it is therefore the duty of this Association to send several Missionaries into that part of the country as soon as they can be obtained."

In offering this resolution, I beg leave to state to the meeting, in as few words as I can, some of the considerations for which I think it ought to pass. But before I do that, Sir, I would take the liberty to congratulate the members and friends of this Association, the community of Liberal Christians in which we live, and our brethren in distant places who are thirsting for the truth, on the fact, that the Association has assumed the past year, as appears by the Report which we have just heard, much more of the *missionary character* than it has had in any previous year, and that in doing so it has not only met with no opposition, but has been fully sustained by the good sense and religious feeling of the great body of Unitarians.

Is it not, Sir, a most auspicious circumstance, full of delightful promise to the Christian philanthropist, that the old prejudice against missions, and especially home missions, — formed perhaps by a too nice and careful observation of their abuses, — has almost entirely faded away, so that there is now no more hazard to one's reputation for liberality of views, or sanity of intellect in speaking favorably of a missionary enterprise than of a commercial, or any other. Is it not an occasion for sincere rejoicing, that this prejudice has not only passed away, but that instead of it a new spirit, not at all its

kin, demanding on the contrary the adoption of missionary measures, has risen up and is manifesting its presence by signs that cannot be mistaken, amongst those who hold like precious faith with us. Sir, these questions are not propounded by my wishes or my hopes; they do not spring from a sanguine conjecture of what *is to be* the state of feeling amongst us on this subject; they proceed rather from solid convictions of what *is*, convictions which are the offspring of facts. Believing that such a spirit now exists in the Unitarian community, I would see this Association the organ through which it shall act upon the world; I would make it the word, the voice of its mighty will, the instrument, the chosen instrument of its sublime efficiency.

They who agree with us in their leading religious opinions have learned, at length, that the spirit of missions enters profoundly into the genius of Christianity. They can trace its majestic workings in all the history of Christ. They see that wherever he went he preached, and that the greater part of the time of his brief ministry was passed in travelling from place to place, proclaiming the good tidings which it was his office, as a Missionary from heaven, to publish to the world; and that this fact stamps one of the most striking features upon his character. They remember too that Philip and Peter and Paul and the rest, — the glorious company of the first preachers, — followed his example; and they begin to expect of us a course of proceeding of a similar sort.

This, Sir, is one reason why I think the resolution which I have had the honor to submit to the meeting, ought to pass. *The spirit of the Unitarian community demands it.* But there are other considerations.

The interests of this Association require the adoption of some such measure as that contemplated in the resolution. The complaint has been that the Association seems to be doing but little good, that while it may be acting to the extent of its means in the great and good cause for the advancement of which it was established, yet that, after all, its visible effect on the state of religion amongst us, and in the country at large, has been but small. I shall not stop to inquire whether this complaint is well or ill founded. I have at present, another object before me, and that is, to show how the complaint, whether just or not, may be effectually suppressed. To be sustained by the congregations to whom it looks for support, the Association must be able to show them in its Annual Reports, — as I am happy to acknowledge it has done this evening, — that it is doing some great good beyond the particular community in which it is established, some good to those who either are not Unitarians, or who, if Unitarians, are so situated that they cannot enjoy the benefits of Unitarian worship. In other words, to satisfy our congregations, it must convince them by its acts, that it is laboring not merely for its own support, for the augmentation of its own resources, to perpetuate its own existence, but for the actual supply of the religious wants of our brethren in distant places, who are deprived of the Christian blessings so liberally bestowed on us, and for the advancement, the visible extension, of the kingdom of Christian truth. In other words still, to satisfy them, it must become thoroughly a *missionary engine.*

Sir, I shall be pardoned, if in the spirit of the complaint to which I have just adverted, I ask, What has

the Association yet done? With the very best of officers, able, eloquent, faithful men, what, after all, has it accomplished? I mean not to speak slightingly of the results which it has brought to pass. I am fully aware of the difficulties with which it has had to contend. I believe that it has done a great deal when viewed by itself, or absolutely, and yet I cannot help feeling, as others do, that it has done very little when considered relatively to our ability as a denomination, and especially to what has been done, and is doing by other denominations. Sir, the Calvinistic Congregationalists of this commonwealth raise annually for Home Missions, besides a vast sum for Foreign Missions, not less than twenty thousand dollars, as appears by their last annual report; and the Baptists, a much smaller denomination, raise for the same purpose from five to eight thousand. And we, who certainly have not less wealth than the latter, do not raise more than one third of the last named sum; not, I verily believe, because we could not obtain more, much more, nay, as much as we could expend to advantage, but because we, who ought to feel the most interest in these things,—we, whose office it is to see that the gospel is preached to every creature, — we, to whom Providence has given great influence over the minds of the philanthropic and benevolent, because *we* do not exert ourselves in this behalf.

I repeat it, Sir, something must be done in this way, if we would sustain the Association. The Auxiliaries expect it. Some of them were formed with the express understanding, that the money which they contributed, a part of it at least, would be appropriated to the sending into distant parts of our country the pure gospel by a

living voice; and since little has been done in this way, — except during the last year (a most gratifying report of whose doings we have just heard) they begin to be reluctant to pay their subscriptions. "What is the money wanted for?" they ask. Why, to enable the Association to defray its expenses, pay its Agent, &c. "But what is the Agent wanted for?" To keep the accounts, superintend the publication of the Tracts, attend to the correspondence, but chiefly to visit the old auxiliaries, stir up a good spirit in them, and get up new ones. "New ones, for what?" To help the parent Association to meet its expenses, pay its Agent, &c. Sir, we have been treading in this mill long enough. It is time for us to go forward, to make an advance, to begin to do something commensurate with the wealth, the intelligence, the philanthropy, the moral power, the Christian principle, of our denomination. We ought to have at least twenty missionaries in the West before the year expires which begins with this day; and I cannot doubt that they would be able to form, in a single year, from the commencement of their labors, an equal number of good Unitarian societies.

And, Sir, the state of religion in the West concurs with these considerations in urging the adoption of the measure contemplated in the resolution. The banks of the Mississippi are the depot for the emigration of the world. Into that immense valley the men of all nations are flocking, as if a universal Pentecost were to be celebrated. They are pouring in from all quarters in a ratio of increase that defies computation. They represent in their opinions every sect of belief and of unbelief, and in their character, it is likely, every grade of spiritual

life, from the lowest to the highest. There they are, Sir, as to religious institutions, in a perfect chaos. They need a formative hand, a hand that is skilful to combine materials which have been hitherto in a state of separation. They want ministers of love and power, who can breathe into this mighty mass the pure life of heaven, who can speak in the name of Jesus Christ, and command light to shine out of the darkness. They want religious teachers, who, by the strong attraction of a blameless life, a holy conversation, a pure and reasonable doctrine, with a warm and earnest eloquence flowing from a perfect faith in the regenerative power of Christian truth, may draw together and form into united communities, those who are at present scattered abroad, — connected with no religious society, blessed by no religious institutions, as sheep without a shepherd.

Other denominations are doing their duty in regard to them. The Catholics are active, as they ought to be; the Methodists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Baptists, all are busy. And shall we, who think we hold the truth in greater simplicity than any other sect, who are accustomed to speak of most others as being yet under a cloud, who claim to have approached in our views nearer to *the Christianity of Christ*, than any other portion of the Christian church, shall we look listlessly on, sit under our own shade, enjoying a lazy and luxurious repose, and allow this blessed opportunity of imparting to thousands of our fellow-men, the light, the strength, the comfort, the joy which we conceive to be in our views of Christianity, to pass by us unimproved, and hear without emotion the strong appeals to our sympathy, the loud calls for our help, which come to us by every messenger from the

West? Sir, it seems to me that if there is a particle of the spirit of Christian benevolence within us, we must all answer NO, with a full and decided emphasis.

In this vast multitude of our fellow-beings, how many sons of New-England parents, bred up under the good influences of our religious institutions, educated here in the Christianity of Christ, to whom the prevalent religious dogmas are offensive, are numbered! How many are there who have gone out from these parts decided and earnest Unitarians, to whom the circumstance that they were to leave behind them their religious privileges, was the occasion of their chief sorrow at their departure, who, as the sabbath returns, sigh for the distant church, where they were brought up in the nurture of the Lord, and long for the time to come, more than they who wait for the morning, when in their own village, just sprung into existence, new-created, they may hear the word of life dispensed after the good way of their Fathers! And besides these how many young, sharp-sighted, enterprising men are there, who having as yet no settled views on religious subjects, having adopted no name significant of a form of belief, but who take no satisfaction in the religious doctrines which are commonly taught, would receive the truth gladly if presented to them as their friend, their counsellor, their comforter, and their guide, if stripped of its austere and mystical clothing, and exhibited in its naked and perfect beauty!

I do not speak on this subject without a knowledge of facts to sustain me. I have received letters, or read the contents of those received by my friends, from families in he capital of Indiana, in several places in Illinois, and even in the new territory of Wisconsin, from respectable,

well educated, cultivated persons, — persons who, when they lived in the Atlantic States, were ornaments to the societies in which they respectively moved, — in which they lament more than all the other inconveniences and privations attending their new settlements, the want of good, sensible, practical preaching. Some of those letters, Sir, are expressed in language, and evince a depth of feeling on the subject, that would extort tears from eyes least accustomed to such signs of emotion, if not money from the most griping hands. These persons would do much themselves for the support of a regular worship. In the town of Tremont, Sir, in Illinois, — a township which a little more than a year ago was an unoccupied prairie, and now contains over a hundred houses, settled mostly by New-Englanders, — I know personally six or eight families, and it is probable there are many more, who are all decided Unitarians, not merely anti-orthodox, but sincere, earnest, well-instructed, well-principled, and well-doing Unitarians. They want a minister. This is but an example, I presume, of the condition of most of the large towns in that State. I mention it because I happen to be acquainted with the facts.

Now, Sir, let us make the case of these persons our own, and do by them as we in their circumstances would be done by. Their case is in a high sense our own. It is made so not merely by the ties of that common nature which we have with them, by that mysterious chain of sympathy which runs through all hearts, and links them together, but by that deep, soul-felt, strong-embracing sentiment of brotherhood, by which in Jesus Christ all Christians are made one, partakers of each others sufferings and triumphs, bearers of each others burdens, and helpers of each others joy.

It is not unlikely, Sir, that even in this assembly, certainly in this commonwealth, there are many fathers whose children have gone out from them to live in those remote places, many mothers whose hearts by an irresistible impulse turn them towards the setting sun at their morning and evening devotions, many sisters who tremble for the fate of their fireside and school, and play companions, lest, on leaving their homes for these new scenes, they shall forget the good ways into which they have been led, and having none to show them the truth, or admonish them of their duty with Christian faithfulness and love, shall fall into sin. All such, I am sure, will respond heartily to the proposition contained in the resolution.

Rev. Jason Whitman, of Portland, Me. said,

Mr. President, — I second the resolution which has just been offered. The subject of missionary efforts has been for some time with me a subject of much thought, and of deep anxiety. I am rejoiced, therefore, that this subject has this evening been brought so distinctly and prominently before us. We have heard of the claims of the West, and of the duties which grow out of those claims. But it is well to have the subject presented in various lights. It will be my object, therefore, to speak of it in relation to our common Christianity, and to our own best interests. When our Saviour offered up his prayer for the sanctification of his followers, it was that they might be sanctified through the power of *Christian truth*. Christian truth then is the instrument appointed by God for the regeneration of mankind. This is the remedy, all-effectual, and the only effectual remedy for

the various evils with which our condition is visited. I have looked with much anxiety upon the political condition of our country, and have been saddened by the doubtful prospect which is before us. I speak not now of one or another political party, but of the general appearance. I have been saddened by the corruption occasionally manifested, and the apparent general tendency to corruption. I have asked for the remedy of these political evils, and the answer has been plain. Let the hearts of rulers, from the highest to the lowest grade, be touched with the power of Christian truth, and our political evils are, comparatively speaking, at an end. I have looked abroad with much anxiety upon the face of society, and have been saddened at the sight of riot and insubordination, of intemperance and licentiousness. I have watched the efforts put forth for the remedy of these evils. These have done much. I would not disparage them. But they do not reach the root of the evil. They should be regarded only as aids. The work will be done and well done only when the hearts of the people are touched with the power of Christian truth. Yes, Mr. President, let the hearts of all be touched with the power of Christian truth, and the evils of our condition will be removed, because sin, the fruitful source of these evils, will be done away.

I am aware that the very power of this instrument is sometimes alleged as an excuse for the neglect to employ it. Just as I was about to leave the office of General Secretary of this Association, I was asked by a distinguished clergyman of our denomination if I had not become satisfied from my year's labor in the office, of the inexpediency of any direct attempts for the advance-

ment of our cause ; if I had not become satisfied that we must leave all to the silent and gradual operation of truth ; truth is powerful and will prevail. Strange reasoning this — Truth is powerful and will prevail ! therefore lift not your finger, put not forth a single effort for the spread of this truth, to bring it into contact with the minds on which its power is to operate. To such a one I would say, carry out your principles, — look upon your children. Lift not a finger, — put not forth a single effort for their salvation, leave it to the silent and gradual operation of Christian truth ; truth is powerful and will prevail. I would say, why do you speak to your people upon the subject of religion ? Is not this making direct exertions ? And yet they live in a land of bibles and Christian light. Why not leave their regeneration and religious improvement to the silent and gradual operation of Christian truth. Truth is powerful and will prevail. I know, Mr. President, that truth is powerful ; yea, with the blessing of God, it is all powerful and will prevail to the pulling down of the strong holds of error and sin. But when and where is it powerful ? It has power only over human minds and human hearts. Consequently it has no power until brought into contact with human minds and human hearts. When will Christian truth manifest its power over the hearts of thousands scattered up and down in our land, who are now indifferent to its claims ? Not surely until it is brought into contact with those hearts. I believe, Mr. President, that truth is powerful, — all powerful, and this is the reason, — the grand the invincible argument in my mind, why the friends of Christian truth should spare no exertions to bring it into contact with every mind and every heart in the land.

If the inhabitants of this land are not regenerated ; if our social, moral, and political evils are not removed, it will not be because the instrument appointed for the purpose by God has not been sufficiently powerful ; it will be because those in whose hands the instrument has been placed, have been unfaithful to their trust, have not employed it as they should have done.

Unfaithful to their trust.— Christian truth is placed in the hands of those to whom it is committed on trust. When our Saviour committed the truths of his religion to his apostles, it was indeed that they might enjoy their influences, that they might be sanctified by their power. But this was not all. They were given upon trust. Those apostles were in duty bound to exert themselves to the utmost for the spread of those truths, that so other hearts might experience and enjoy their influence and be sanctified by their power. But, Mr. President, I know not what may be the opinions and feelings of others, but it is my firm conviction that the same obligations which rested upon the apostles, are, to a certain degree, binding upon every Christian, in every age of the church. Every one is within the sphere of his influence, and according to the talents committed to him, to do something for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. And he who is unwilling to lift his finger in this cause, proves false to the trust imposed upon him. Would that we could feel as we ought, the responsibility that is upon us. Would that we could feel that the Christian truth, which we value so highly, for which we are thanking God, the influences of which we are enjoying, and by the power of which we are made holier and happier, would, I say, that we could feel that this truth is not our exclusive

possession, discovered by our own superior ingenuity, or given to us because we are the special favorites of heaven, but that it belongs in common to the family of man, and that we are most solemnly bound, as stewards of Jesus Christ, and accountable to God, to communicate this truth to our fellow-men, that other hearts may be filled with gratitude, and other souls may be regenerated and sanctified.

I am not, Mr. President, advocating, as some may suppose, a mere sectarian movement. I place the cause of missions upon the broad principle of gospel benevolence. Jesus, our Saviour, looked upon mankind, not as divided into kingdoms and nations, not as distinguished by different institutions and languages, or marked by different shades. No; he lookod upon the children of men as all alike related to one common father, and as all alike, brethren of the same family. He looked upon man as a spiritual being with spiritual capacities, in a state of spiritual bondage, and it was his endeavor to awaken the spiritual energies of the human soul, and lead men on to high spiritual elevation and happiness. If, Mr. President, we possess the spirit of Christ, we shall regard mankind in the same light in which he did. In this spirit you may look abroad upon society, and wherever you see a debased, degraded, abandoned wretch, you see a brother, a child of your own heavenly Father; you see one with capacities which, had he enjoyed the influences of Christian truth, would have raised him high in the scale of holiness and heavenly happiness. Nay, more, you see one, who, even now, could his soul, in the midst of its degradation, be brought under the influence of Christian truth, might be regenerated, purified, and made meet

for the happiness of heaven. And can any one who looks upon mankind in this light, refrain from putting forth efforts for the rescue of his fellow-men from the thraldom of sin. It is upon this broad principle of gospel benevolence that I place all missionary efforts. I would not make efforts to advance our cause, because if we do not other denominations will occupy the ground; but I would spend and be spent to be instrumental in saving one soul from sin. I would not send out laborers into the great Western valley to oppose the Catholics, or the Presbyterians, the Methodists or Baptists. But I would practice self-denial, and make self-sacrifices, to send out those who may arrest the progress of skepticism, check the power of worldly-mindedness, and awaken men from indifference to their highest and best interests. To all who fear the sectarian tendency of missionary efforts, I have two questions to put. They are these. If there were no other Christian denomination in the world than our own, should we not be under the most solemn obligations to put forth our efforts for the spread of the gospel. And if so, is it probable that we should be at all successful without some kind of organization? And does the existence of different denominations destroy the obligations, or render useless the mode? It is not a sectarian movement that I am advocating. I take my stand upon the broad and firm basis of gospel principles, and would urge my fellow-Christians to act up to the solemn responsibilities that are upon them. I have spoken, Mr. President, of missionary efforts, as in reference to our common Christianity. I would offer a few words upon their relation to our own best interests.

There are sometimes fears expressed in regard to the

permanency of our long established societies, — and the question is often asked what can be done to render them more permanent, — to establish them more firmly. My answer would be, that one of the ways of doing this is to interest them deeply in missionary efforts. God has so ordered his government, that the faithful discharge of duty is the best means of improvement. This general principle will hold good in regard to this as well as in regard to other duties. The permanency of our religious societies depends upon the interest which men take in religion. But you can in no way so well deepen interest in any cause, as by calling upon men to labor in that cause. The more they labor, the greater the exertions they actually put forth — the greater the sacrifices they really make, — the greater will be their interest in the cause. And this, Mr. President, will hold especially true in regard to the subject of religion. It is on this ground, especially, that I have looked with deep interest on missionary efforts. I regard the good which is accomplished in those parts of our land where missionaries are sent, as of great importance, but I regard the good experienced by those who assist in sending them, as of far more importance. I would say to my brethren, if you would promote the stability and permanency of the religious societies with which you are connected, urge upon your hearers the importance of acting out the spirit of the Gospel in vigorous missionary exertions, and I am satisfied that you will reap the good effects. Indeed, such are my feelings in regard to the good influences upon our old and well established societies of engaging actively in the duty of spreading the truth, that I do not believe it pos-

sible for any society to flourish as a *Christian* society, in Christian virtues and graces, in the neglect of it.

Still further, Mr. President, we are under obligations to engage actively in missionary efforts, and to collect funds for missionary purposes, — that we may discharge our duty to those young men who have entered the Christian ministry. In the Report of your Secretary, Sir, it is stated that there is a great want of laborers. That cry has been kept up for these many years. And it is true, true to the letter. But it is not true in the sense in which young men suppose it to be. There are not scattered all over our land, societies which will give a man a competent support. Our young men must have food and clothing. If, Sir, we would really encourage young men to enter the ministry, — if we would meet the want there is of laborers in the field, we should have funds from which we can support young men in our new parishes, until they become sufficiently established to give a competent support of themselves. I do hope, Mr. President, that the resolution which has been offered, and in support of which I have spoken, will be passed, and that it will not merely be passed as a matter of form, but will become in every heart a living, active, controlling resolution. I hope that we shall not only say "this Association ought to do this," but shall be willing to assist according to our ability and influence, in furnishing the means by which it may be enabled to do it.

Here, I am aware, Mr. President, that my remarks should close. But I trust that I shall be excused, if I say one word in commending the General Secretary of this Association to the sympathies of the friends of our faith. I know, Sir, from personal experience, what are

the labors, the wearing perplexities, and anxieties, and cares of that office. I know too, the overwhelming sense of responsibility that rests upon him who sustains it. I know, Mr. President, that no amount of money can fully compensate him who, like the present incumbent, is faithful to the duties of that important office. Would you have him labor, then, with cheerfulness, with zeal and success, — let him go forth animated and sustained by your warmest sympathies, — let him feel that he is accompanied in his labors by your good wishes, and that amid his soul-wearing anxieties and perplexities, he is remembered at the throne of grace, in the prayers of thousands of the pious, and devout, and benevolent.

After the addresses, which were listened to with deep interest by a numerous audience, the question on the acceptance of the Report was put by the chairman, Judge Story, and carried by a unanimous vote. The meeting was then closed by singing the "Dismission Hymn."

CONSTITUTION

OF THE

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

1. The name of this Association shall be THE AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

2. The object of this Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity throughout our country.

3. Unitarian Christians throughout the United States shall be invited to unite and co-operate with this Association.

4. An annual subscription of one dollar shall constitute a person a member so long as such subscription shall be paid, and a subscription of $30 shall constitute a person a member for life.

5. The officers shall be a President, fifteen Vice Presidents, a General Secretary, who shall have the care of all the business and interests of the Association under the control of the Executive Committee, an Assistant Secretary who, in case of the absence or sickness of the General Secretary, shall perform such duties of a Recording and Corresponding Secretary as may require immediate attention, a Treasurer, and three Directors.

6. The Directors, Secretaries, and Treasurer, shall constitute the Executive Committee, who shall meet once in each month, and shall have the direction of the funds and operations of the Association.

7. An annual meeting shall be held at such time and place as the Executive Committee shall deem advisable, of which due notice shall be given, and at which officers shall be cho-

sen, reports be made, and any other business be transacted, which may come before the Association.

8. The Executive Committee shall have power to fill any vacancies which may occur among the officers between any two annual meetings.

9. Any amendments of this constitution shall be proposed at one annual meeting, and may be accepted at the next anniversary, if two thirds of the members present be in favor of such amendments.

Vote passed by the Executive Committee, September 23, 1826, as amended March 18, 1830.

'*Resolved*, That every member of the Association be entitled to one copy of every tract *of the first and second series*, published by the Association *during the year for which his subscription is entered.*'

Vote of the Executive Committee, passed January 4, 1826.

'*Voted*, That no society be recognised as auxiliary to this Association, the terms of subscription to which are less than those required in the Constitution of this Association.

Vote passed by the Executive Committee, June 20, 1833.

Voted, That the 4th Article of the Constitution be so construed, that any one who shall pay $30 for the General Agency of the American Unitarian Association, either at once, or by annual instalments within five years, shall be considered a life member.

CLERGYMEN MEMBERS FOR LIFE.

The following Clergymen have been made members for life of the American Unitarian Association, by the donation of thirty dollars or more, principally from ladies of their respective societies.

Abbot, Abiel.
Alden, Seth,
Alger, Horatio.
Allen, Joseph.
Bancroft, Aaron, D. D.
Barrett, Samuel.
Bartlett, John.
Barry, William.
Bascom, Ezekiel L.
Bigelow, Andrew.
Brazer, John.
Briggs, Charles.
Brooks, Charles.
Buckingham, Edgar.
Channing, Wm. E., D. D.
Clarke, Amos.
Colman, Henry.
Damon, David.
Dewey, Orville.
Edes, Henry, D. D.
Farley, Frederic A.
Field, Joseph.
*Flint, Jacob.
Flint, James, D. D.
Fox, Thomas B.
Furness, Wm. H.
Gannett, Ezra S.
Gannett, Thomas B.
Greenwood, F. W. P.
Hall, Edward B.
Hamilton, Luther.
Hosmer, George W.
Howe, Moses,
Ingersoll, George G.
Johnson, Rufus, A.
Kendall, James, D. D.
Lamson, Alvan.
Lincoln, Calvin.
*Little, Robert.
Loring, Bailey.
Lothrop, Samuel K.
May, Samuel, Jr.
Moore, Josiah.
Motte, Melish, I.
Muzzey, Artemas B.
Nichols, Ichabod, D. D.
Osgood, Peter.
Palfrey, John G., D. D.
*Parker, Nathan, D. D.
Parkman, Francis, D. D.
Peabody, Wm. B. O.
Pierpont, John.
Ripley, Ezra, D. D.
Ripley, George.
Ripley, Samuel.
Richardson, Joseph.

*Dead.

Robbins, Samuel, D.
Robinson, Charles.
Sewall, Charles C.
Sewall, Edmund Q.
Stetson, Caleb.
Storer, John P. B.
Sullivan, Thomas R.
Sweet, John D.
Thayer, Christopher T.
Thompson, James W.
Walker, James, D. D.
Ware, Henry, Jr., D. D.
Ware, William.
Wells, George W.
*Whitman, Bernard.
Whitman, Nathaniel.
Young, Alexander.

OTHER MEMBERS FOR LIFE.

Abbot, Samuel.
Adams, Benjamin, T.
Adams, James, Jr.
Adams, Philip.
Alger, Cyrus.
Alger, Francis.
Ames, David W.
Ames, Mrs. David.
Andrews, Ebenezer T.
Aspinwall, Samuel.
Atherton, Charles H.
Appleton, Nathan.
Ball, S. S.
Barrett, Nathaniel, A.
Baker, Henry F.
*Bird, John H.
Blanchard, Hezekiah.
Blake, Mrs. Sarah.
Bliss, Mrs. B. D.
Bliss, Theodore.
Bradlee, Joseph P.
Bracket, Samuel E.
Brewster, Misses.
Brooks, Peter C.
Bond, George,
Bond, George W.
Bowditch, Nathaniel.
Bowles, Samuel.
Cartwright, Charles W.
Carew, Joseph.
Chapman, Mrs. Jonathan.
Chapin, Harvey,
Clapp, Joshua.
Colton, George.
Cotton, John.
Cotton, Joseph, Jr.
Cobb, Elijah.
Coffin, George W.
Coolidge, Joseph.
Crocker, James H.
Curtis Joseph.
Cushing, T. P.
Dascomb, Thomas R.
Dana, Dexter.
Davis, Charles S.
Danforth, Isaac.
Davis, James.
Davis, James, Jr

Denny, Daniel.
Dorr, Samuel.
Dorr, John.
Draper, James.
Dwight, William.
Dwight, George.
Dwight, Mrs. Mary.
Dwight, Jonathan.
Eager, William.
Edwards, Elisha.
Ellis, David.
Emerson, George B.
Emmons, John L.
Everett, Otis.
Fairbanks, Stephen.
Fairbanks, Henry P.
Fearing, Albert.
Fitch, Jeremiah.
Fisher, Joshua.
Foster, Charles W.
Fowle, C. S.
Foster, Charles A.
Foot, Homer.
Francis, Eben.
Frost, George.
Gassett, Henry.
Gray, Frederick T.
Gray, Harrison.
Gould, Benjamin A.
Hammond, Samuel.
Hammond, Daniel.
Hall, Jacob.
Hawes, Prince.
Hedge, Barnabas.
Hews, Abraham, Jr.
Hewett, H. N.
Heath, Charles.
Hendee, Charles J.
Howard, Abraham.
Howard, Charles.
Howard, John.
Howe, John.
Inches, Henderson.
Inches, Miss.
Jackson, Francis.
*Johnson, Milton.
Johnson, James.
Jones, Mrs. J. C.
King, Gedney.
Kuhn, George H.
Lawrence, William.
Lawrence, Amos.
Lamson, Benjamin.
Lamson, John.
Lane, George.
Lewis, S. S.
Lincoln, Oliver.
Lincoln, M. S.
Low, Francis,
Low, John J.
Lombard, Ammi C.
Loring William J.
Loring, J.
May, Samuel.
May, Joseph.
Marsh, Ephraim.
Mellen, Michael.
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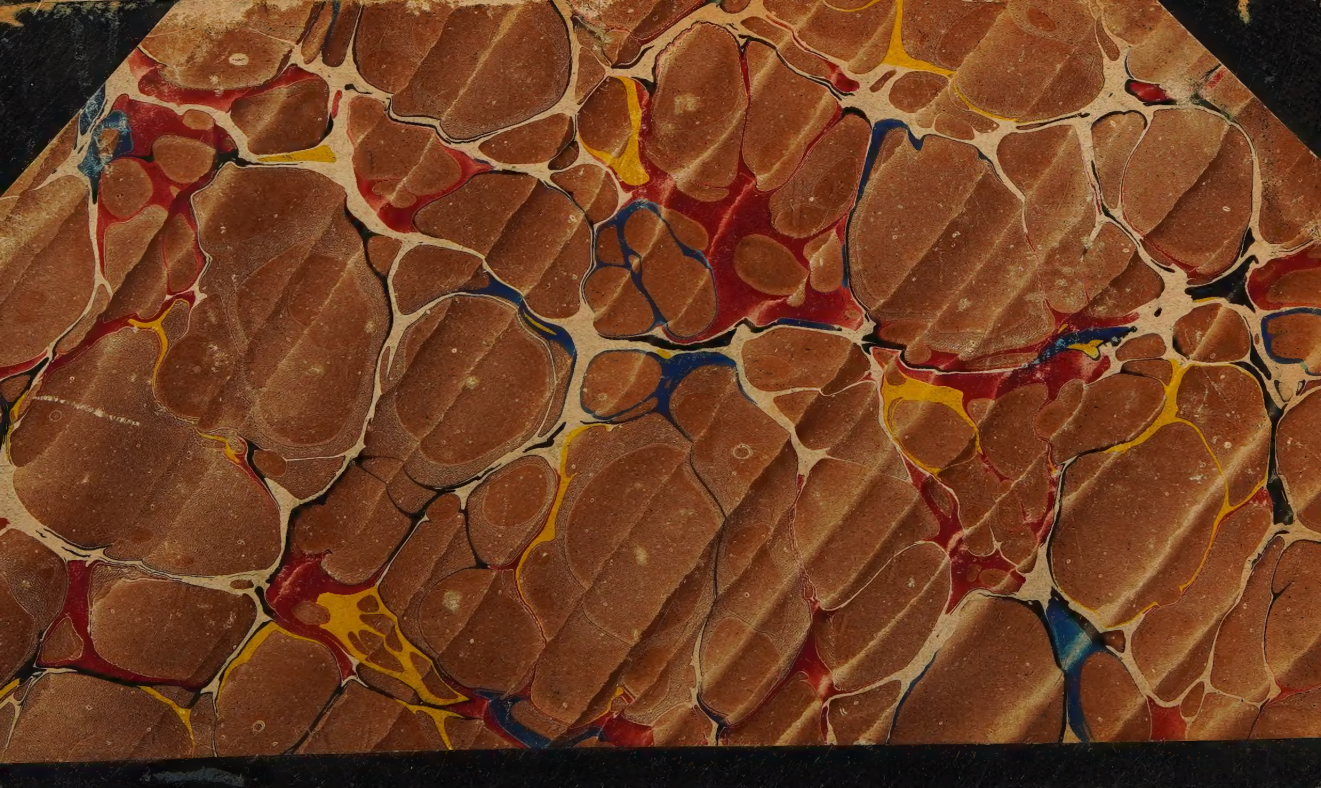
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